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ACROSS ENGLAND IN A DOG-CART



CARREG CENNIN CASTLE

Across England

in a Dog Cart

From London to St. Davids and Back

BY

JAMES JOHN HISSEY

AUTHOR OF 'A DRIVE THROUGH ENGLAND,' 'ON THE BOX SEAT,'
'A TOUR IN A PHAETON,' ETC.



'While we find God's signet
Fresh on English ground,
Why go gallivanting
With the nations round ?'

KINGSLEY.

WITH SIXTEEN FULL-PAGE (AND SOME SMALLER) ILLUSTRATIONS
BY THE AUTHOR

AND A MAP OF THE ROUTE

LONDON

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1891

TO
“ DOLL ”
I DEDICATE
THIS SIMPLE CHRONICLE OF
A MOST DELIGHTFUL AND ENJOYABLE
EXPEDITION



MAIL COACH PILLAR

See page 173

PREFACE

THIS volume is the simple, unvarnished account of a holiday excursion along the old coach roads. Starting from London, we drove right across England and Wales to far-off St. Davids, that curious city of cottages which stands remote from railways on the most westerly point of the Principality—a wild, wind-swept promontory : the Land's End of Wales.

As to the accommodation on the road, of course it varied considerably. On the whole, we were well satisfied with our fare and treatment ; but then I do not expect to find all the comforts of my home when I go a-travelling, nor do I look for the luxuries of a London club, nor do I desire the display of a modern company-managed hotel,—the old-fashioned English inn, with small show and much comfort, is far more to my mind ; so are the charges thereof.

The journey was a most delightful one, and during our quiet progress we often found ourselves pitying the more rapid railway traveller ; for what recks he of the miles and miles of spreading loveliness that lie unseen between two distant spots ; what knows he of the real pleasures of travel, of the romance of the road, of the comforts of the past-

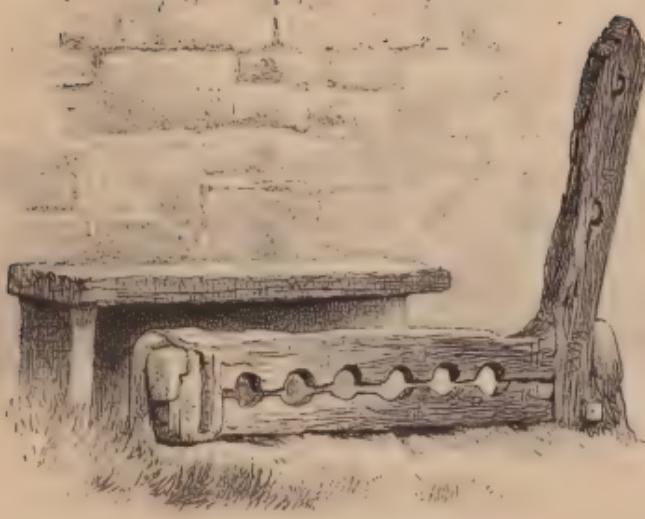
time coaching inns that still stand by the side of the half-forsaken highways, of the quaint old-world villages with their queer, old-fashioned folk, of the moated manor-houses and legend-haunted homes, of the picturesque farmsteads, of the numberless beauty-spots and revelations of scenery, or of the countless charms of the country-side? These are reserved for the more leisurely traveller by road—lucky mortal he!

After our long drive from London to St. Davids and back, and all that we had seen on the way, we felt that we had really made a journey in the ancient meaning of the word, with all its many incidents and varying delights, its changeful scenes and constant surprises; and we realised the distance we had traversed as no one possibly can who hastens across country by rail, annihilating space truly, but sacrificing for speed the infinite pleasure of a restful progress through the most beautiful country in the world.

The illustrations, engraved from my sketches by Mr. Pearson, will, I trust, lend an added interest to this account of our old-fashioned journey by road,—a journey taken for pleasure only, and in every way a success.

J. J. H.

1891



MITCHELTROY STOCKS

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MARKET CROSS, ST. DAVIDS

See page 211



J. T. H.

ACROSS ENGLAND IN A DOG-CART

CHAPTER I

The pleasures of driving across country—A true holiday—Post-haste *versus* steam-haste—The start—The right sort of carriage for the road—A bee-farm—An old inn sign—A half-timbered manor house—A pretty village—Uxbridge—Touring on wheels.

DR. JOHNSON upon one occasion, when posting across country with Boswell, remarked, "Life has little better to offer than this." City lover though the famous doctor was, the delights of driving through the country drew from him this avowal. After such a confession from such an authority, I feel that I may the more readily and confidently express my own conviction—arrived at after many years' experience of the pleasures of road-travel—that for true enjoyment there are few if any methods of spending a

summer holiday more delightful than the taking of a driving tour through some portion of picturesque England.

Not the least of the many attractions of an outing of this kind is its perfect freedom. Journeying thus, you can start on your day's pilgrimage when you choose, for you are released from the thraldom of time-tables ; you have no weary waiting to endure at dismal junctions for unpunctual trains, nor have you any cause to worry about your luggage, for that goes with you ; you can stop on your way when and where you will, and at your pleasure jog along : thus may you enjoy for a while a wandering Bohemian kind of existence as an agreeable change from the manifold restraints and conventionalities of society, or the compulsory exactions of a professional or a business career—and a change of life as well as of scene is one of the essentials of a true holiday.

When starting out upon such an old-fashioned tour, you have all the charms of freshness and pleasant possibilities before you, for your route takes you out of the hackneyed tourist-line of travel and leads you ever and again into remote unfamiliar beauty-spots unnoted by the guide-book compiler,—and what a fascination there is in exploring the unknown, even though such be a portion of your native land.

It is, alas ! a regrettable fact that in this railway-travelling age, when everybody rushes through the country at steam-haste (not to be confounded with the leisurely "post-haste" of the days gone by), now hidden in a cutting, now buried in a darksome

tunnel—and cuttings and tunnels generally abound where the scenery is the most romantic and best worth seeing,—it is, as I have said, a regrettable fact that in this age of steam and speed so much of the most lovely, if not the most remarkable portions of our island scenery should be unknown to the majority of Englishmen, its rare beauties undreamt of; left there only for the simple rustic to admire, or perchance a stray artist, or possibly, if there be a fishful stream or river near, to the quiet contemplation of the solitary angler, attracted to the spot in hope of sport.

For those “long in city pent” how refreshing it is in the warm summer-time to escape for a while from the din of traffic and the dust and bustle of crowded streets; to such what can be more exhilarating and health-giving than a driving tour, with the necessary delightful compulsion of spending the whole long day in the fresh pure air without fatigue? There is no tonic in the whole *Pharmacopœia* to compare to that of the bracing breezes of the downs, of the moors, of the hills, or of the sea-coast. And how sweet and invigorating is the atmosphere of the open country everywhere! to inhale it makes living for itself a pleasure; it infuses fresh blood into one’s veins, a light joyousness into one’s being: yes, no small advantage of such an outing is its health-giving qualities. Though you are on a driving jaunt, you are not for that reason bound to sit lazily in your conveyance all the time, you can walk as much as ever you like, and explore afoot inviting byways

to your heart's content, and so combine plenty of fresh air with ample exercise and a complete freedom from brain-work.

Truly we employ the railway for speed, but for real enjoyment give me the road; the road that leads the much-to-be-envied traveller thereon naturally through the heart of Old England and that takes him into close contact with her people, enticing him along in an irresistibly friendly manner, never disappointing him, and ever suggesting future possibilities of good things to come. To know rural England is to love it dearly, for the English landscape has a heart, and its mellow unassuming beauty comes very near to him who goes forth leisurely to seek it.

Speed is a very excellent thing in its way, and railways are ugly blessings, but still for all there are times and circumstances when a quiet restful progress is more to be desired and sought after -

Whiles carried o'er the iron road
We hurry by some fair abode :
•The garden bright amidst the hay,
The yellow wain upon the way,
The dining men, the wind that sweeps
Light locks from off the sun-sweet heaps ;
The gable gray, the hoary roof,
Here now—and now so far aloof.
How sorely then we long to stay
And midst its sweetness wear the day.
And 'neath its changing shadows sit,
And feel ourselves a part of it.

As the time comes round for the annual exodus of the town-tired Londoner, the important questions

as to where he shall go and how he shall spend his summer outing inevitably present themselves. Thousands of unpatriotic Britons solve the problem of where to go by rushing off to the Continent, unmindful of the excellent advice of quaint old Fuller, "Know most of the rooms of thy native country, before thou goest over the threshold thereof, especially seeing England presents thee with so many observables"; advice as pertinent in the present day as when first written, or perhaps more so.

It is some years ago now since I ventured to take my holiday in a manner then somewhat out of the usual course, and selected to try a driving tour by way of change from the monotonous routine of ordinary travel; a departure I have every reason to congratulate myself upon having taken. The result of my first long "cruise on wheels" was that I spent the most enjoyable vacation imaginable, free from all the minor worries of travel, besides laying up for myself a store of health and strength, and bright memories of happy days never to be forgotten. Surely an ideal holiday this!

That first driving expedition from London to North Wales and back was followed next year by another more lengthened and, were it possible, even more delightful drive of a similar kind to Scotland and home. These two extensive excursions, in quest of holiday pleasure and relaxation only, I can truly state were a revelation to me of unimagined beauties and of scenic surprises. It was then that it dawned upon me that I had travelled far and wide over many lands without really knowing my own. The

easy restful progress through miles and miles of fresh country with new landscapes ever opening out, and a mellow beauty all around, charmed me as I had never been charmed before.

What can be more delightful than to find oneself with a favourite and sympathetic companion on the threshold of such an expedition, with all untravelled England before one, not bound on deliberate sightseeing, nor feeling any compulsion to carry out any pre-arranged programme, taking *Carpe diem* as a motto, content simply to enjoy each day's delights and to let the future take care of itself?

So it happened, having previously made all our arrangements, we, my wife and self that is, started one gloriously fine afternoon on a drive of some hundreds of miles from London to St. Davids in South Wales and back, or, to be more exact, it was on 1st September 1890 that we found ourselves seated in our four-wheel dog-cart (a new carriage, built and planned especially for road-work, of which presently), our belongings carefully stowed away, not forgetting our sketch-books, photographic apparatus, maps, rugs, waterproofs, road-books, and other necessaries—or luxuries. The word was given, the traces tightened, our horses' heads were turned westwards, and we trotted on apace, anxious to get, as soon as might be, out of the wearisome maze of suburban houses and streets. Our journey so long planned and talked of had begun, the pleasures of anticipation were about to give way to even the greater pleasures of realisation!

Our former expeditions had been taken in a

roomy phaeton ; and many hundreds of miles over all sorts of country, and in all sorts of weather, had the phaeton gone with us. We regarded it therefore with much the same kind of affection as an old sailor regards his ship that has been many a long voyage with him, has traversed many a sea, has weathered many a storm. This year, however, we determined to have a special carriage built, one expressly suited to the peculiar requirements of road-work, though it cost us something to desert our good and staunch old craft the phaeton. The outcome of our determination was that after long and careful consideration we decided to have a four-wheel dog-cart built. The advantages of such a conveyance, designed for its special purpose, are many over an ordinary carriage designed simply for the usual routine of everyday work—driving, calling, shopping, or “doing” the park.

Our new dog-cart is constructed of light-coloured wood, simply varnished, so as to show the dust as little as possible, the wheels only are painted the old mail red, both for cheerfulness and as being the most serviceable colour : it is compact, strong though not heavy, and was above all designed for use not show ; yet it looks both smart and thoroughly workmanlike, possessing as it does the essential qualification of fitness for its purpose. When on the road our belongings are stowed away in the roomy compartment below, secure from rain as well as dust. This compartment locks up, so that when baiting at an inn no chance loafer in the stable-yard thereof can “convey ” (which is, I believe, the polite term

for stealing amongst the fraternity) to himself any trifling loose article. On the top of the dog-cart, between the seats, is a fitted box that also locks up. This is so arranged as to be easily opened by the driver at any time; in it we packed those articles which we might require at a short notice. A travelling-clock is fitted at the foot of the splash-board, a long horn (for use) in a leather case is slung in a handy position at the right-hand side of the driver, a powerful brake is provided, and lastly, the lamps, intended for service and to really throw a good light ahead, are large and such as were employed on the old coaches. Some idea of what the carriage is like may be gathered from the illustration at the head of this chapter.

But after this digression, to return to ourselves, as we were making a late start, we decided to drive only as far as Uxbridge and take up our quarters there for the night. Our route led us through Acton, Ealing, Hanwell, and Southall, a road with few scenic attractions. As far as Ealing there are houses, more or less, on either side of the way, with only occasionally an unbuilt-on space affording a peep of the country beyond; but when we did obtain them, these peeps of the green fields and blue distances were very pleasing, and made us long to get right away into the real open unspoilt country.

As we passed through Hanwell we observed an ancient inn sign bearing an unfamiliar title, *The Old Hat*, to wit. The hat, which was represented in metal cut out to shape and painted, resembled the traditional brigand's headgear as seen on the

stage if nowhere else. A notice below stated that the inn had been "established 300 years," so that it must have seen many changes and outlived many generations of landlords. Whether the form of hat is the same as that originally set up I cannot say, but the quaintness of the sign gave something of an interest to the commonplace street.

Just before Southall we passed a field dotted all over with bee-hives, which a board informed us was "Southall Bee-farm." We could not help wondering if bee-farming were a profitable occupation; in all our wanderings we had never come upon one before. Here at Southall is an interesting old half-timbered manor house that would make a charming water-colour sketch, its picturesqueness being emphasised by its mean modern surroundings.

After leaving Southall, and when nearing Hillingdon, the road plucked up a little spirit and became even almost pretty in places. It was very refreshing to come upon a bit of green open houseless country with trees and hedgerows on either side, in place of the rows of stucco terraces and the wearisome succession of detached and semi-detached villas we had traversed so far; for the suburbs of London are "long drawn out,"—suburbs the houses of which are so essentially the product of the nineteenth century, one and all but too suggestive of the speculative builder, constructed possibly to outlast the lease of the ground on which they stand—with repairs from time to time, of course;—but that is the tenant's business. What a curse to beauty is this running up of houses in rows, or otherwise,

for sale ; the builder his own architect, and whose chief aim seems, alas ! to be an unhappy combination of cheap construction with money-making. Yes, it was pleasant to feel that at last we had got beyond the mean suburbs of the richest city in the world,—an overgrown city that still is growing apace, with an appetite for swallowing up each year so many green fields that seems never to be satiated.

Hillingdon was the next place we passed through, and it struck us as being a rather pretty village, with its flint-built, countrified church, and its tiny village-green with an ancient elm thereon, from the trunk of which hung the rural inn sign, the device upon it weathered out of all recognition. Soon after leaving this we arrived at the end of our first day's stage, just as the sun was setting crimson in the west before us, giving every prospect of a fine day for the morrow, for, as the old country weather-lore has it : "Red at night is a shepherd's delight." And these old sayings are not to be despised.

At Uxbridge we patronised the Chequers Hotel, where we found comfortable quarters for ourselves and moreover good stabling and fodder for our horses. In the coffee-room we had for company a sun-browned tricyclist just returning home from an extended tour, who entertained us with an interesting account of his expedition. We soon discovered that our tricyclist travelled like ourselves to see and enjoy the country, not to simply cover so many miles a day, and boast afterwards of the distance accomplished (as I fear some wheelmen

do), as though the end and aim of travel were to cover so many miles in so many hours. Those cyclists who rush across country as fast as their machines will carry them, and would go even faster if they could, always appear to me to be in a constant state of anxiety to be somewhere else than where they may chance to be at any time. Possibly this restless desire to be ever on the move is begotten by the very powers of rapid transit afforded by the cycle.

By the way, I have often wondered, had it only been invented then, what our steady-going forefathers would have thought of the bicycle; in their days it would have been a real blessing, enabling many a person whose limited means prevented him going far from home to travel about and see something of his own country beyond his native shire, to visit friends at a distance, and all with small cost and much independence. How delightful, too, it would have been to ride the steel steed over the well-kept main roads as they existed in the heyday of the coaching age! I say main roads, for many of the by-roads were then, as now, not so smooth, rutless, and stoneless as could be desired.

I have experimented a little in tricycling myself, but to me the objections to this economical and, in some respects, charmingly independent mode of travel are, the very limited amount of luggage that can be taken (this is fatal to comfort, especially on a long tour), the difficulty of keeping dry on a rainy day, the almost impossibility of doing so when, as often is the case, it is both windy and wet, the

extra exertion, not to say toil, involved in propelling your machine when the roads are heavy and muddy, and the necessity of cleaning and oiling your cycle from time to time, especially when covered with mud, a dirty job at the best, and yet one not to be lightly handed over to an unsympathetic ostler with small or no experience in such matters : no, it is not enjoyable when arriving at your inn, perhaps both late and tired, and sometimes wet, to have to set to work to clean your machine—but *chacun à son goût*.

CHAPTER II

A house with a history—An old oak-panelled room—Cromwell as a painter—Roadside pictures—The beauty of ivy—Scotch firs—Chalfont St. Peter—A ford to cross—The picturesque incidents of road-travel—A palimpsest brass—A gipsies' encampment—Chalfont St. Giles—Milton's cottage—Cromwell's inexhaustible cannon-balls—Jordans—The utility of the horn—A conceit in ironwork—Amersham.

A FINE bright morning with a balmy southern breeze tempted us to make an early start. The red sunset overnight had not belied its promise of good weather to come: a more inspiriting day on which to proceed with our journey we could not have desired had we even the making of it, and we rejoiced accordingly. Little wonder that we felt in high spirits and on the best of possible terms with ourselves and every one else, for was not our holiday all unspent before us wherein to wander whither we would? In truth we felt as "jolly" and light-hearted as schoolboys in the same enviable position.

As we left Uxbridge at one end of that long-streeted town, we noticed a public-house the sign-board of which proclaimed it to be The Old Treaty House and Crown Inn. The title struck us as suggestive of some possible historic incident being connected with the place: certainly the old

building with its stone-mullioned windows guarded by iron bars seemed as though it ought to have some romance connected with it waiting perchance to be unearthed. Attracted by the look of this ancient house, we pulled up at the doorway, and entering found the landlord behind the bar—a portly individual, if I remember aright, communicative, and civil withal. Instead of "trying the tap" so early in the morning, a small silver coin changed ownership, in return for which "mine host" kindly allowed us to see over the place, informing us, in reply to our inquiries, that "It is called the Treaty House because, as you know" (as a matter of fact, however, we knew nothing whatever about the matter, but did not betray our sad ignorance by any remark); "because, as you know," said the landlord, "a treaty was signed here between King Charles and the Parliament in the year 1645." What a thing it is to have a memory for dates. "It was signed in one of the oak-panelled rooms upstair, and if you'll please follow me I'll show it you; and I think when you sees it you'll own it's a very fine room." Then we mounted some creaky stairs and entered an ancient panelled chamber possessing some good carved work, next we were shown the treaty-room, the one in which the treaty (that never came to anything after all) was signed. The oak panelling here, which is in a fairly good state of preservation, is in parts very fine, the carving of the pilasters is excellent, and the capitals are full of delicate detail, as sharp now as the day the workman's chisel left them, possibly some three centuries ago. The

ample fireplace is worthy of the room, being boldly designed and carved in high relief with effective scroll-work and figures of boys. The oak doors of this interesting old chamber have steel hinges, quaintly shaped and showing on the woodwork externally, in the picturesque old-fashioned way, and a very charming way too, for hinges that show can be made very ornamental ; but the modern builder has changed all this, he gets his cast-iron work by the ton from Birmingham, and carefully hides it out of sight, for it is neither ornamental nor over strong, and certainly not pleasant to look upon—*but it is cheap.*

The builder of old, who knew how to build, gloried in showing his construction everywhere, for his work was honest and would stand inspection, and so he was wisely content to decorate his construction. In the present advanced year of grace, we are careful above all to hide our construction and stick on our ornamentations, for the modern builder's beams are thin, his joints rough, his woodwork flimsy, his ceilings, instead of being pleasantly broken by open rafters, are a mass of flat white plaster, which like putty covers a multitude of faults. But I am wandering. When I began this digression we were in the old panelled treaty-room : though some of the carved oak-work therein is worm-eaten and in places would be all the better for a little careful reparation, we did not hear with unalloyed pleasure that the historic old chamber was about to be restored, lest something worse should happen to it than the gentle ruin wrought by time.

As we were leaving the old house our attention

was attracted by the very indifferently-painted picture of a young girl that was hanging in the bar. This curious art production was not quite equal to the general run of the highly-coloured prints that so frequently adorn (or otherwise) the walls of rural inns, and would not have attracted our particular notice but for a card attached to it on which was written :

OLIVER CROMWELL'S DAUGHTER,
FOUND BENEATH THE OLD OAK
PANELLING IN THE OLD TREATY-ROOM.
AS SKETCHED BY HIMSELF.

If the sturdy Oliver ever painted this, I can only say that he was a vastly better soldier than he was an artist. It is well when touring about country not to be severely critical, as a too matter-of-fact spirit ruins a good deal of romance. Many a pretty tradition and old relic will not bear too close an investigation as to its genuineness. But still there are limits to the faith of even the most credibly-inclined and good-natured tourist, and this picture tried our faith over much. We asked no particulars as to its discovery, we did not even venture to suggest a doubt as to the authenticity of the painting ; we had no desire to wound the worthy landlord's feelings, so we merely remarked that we had no idea that Cromwell could paint at all, and with this we took our departure.

Our road on leaving Uxbridge led us over two bridges, from one of which we had a long vista of a canal, quite a Dutch-like prospect, as if to show how varied our home-scenery can be. Close to one of the bridges stood an old water-mill, and as we

passed by a waggon and team of horses chanced to be standing at the door laden with sacks. The old mill and its surroundings formed quite a ready-made picture, more pleasing to look upon than many an Academy painting, even though hung on the line; indeed the whole of our journey henceforth, outward and homeward, save the last stage in, was nothing but a succession of pictures—pictures that reminded us of many artists, but chiefly perhaps of Birket Foster, an artist who seems so successfully to have caught the feeling and spirit of the quiet everyday beauties of the English wayside and countryside.

Driving on, we presently passed a rambling farmstead with its surrounding barns and outbuildings covered with green creepers and ivy, proving how nature can clothe and decorate a building when left to take her own way in the matter. What would England be without the familiar ivy-plant that loves to creep up everywhere, hiding with a tender hand ugliness and unlovely scars, and giving an added grace to even a beautiful building or ancient ruin? Gray's "ivy-mantled tower" would lose half its poetry and nearly all its picturesqueness robbed of its dark green covering. How fondly ivy clings to a building, training itself and twining itself about in a most free and charming manner; summer or winter it is always green and eye-pleasing, and how graceful is the form of its leaves. Ivy, like the glorious glowing gorse, is too common to be appreciated as it should be; a great deal of both the charm and rare beauty of our ruined abbeys, castles, and ancient homes would be gone were they stripped

of their clinging faithful ivy. Unfortunately somehow this ruin-loving plant has earned the evil, though undeserved, reputation of causing damp and decay, and therefore injuring buildings ; yet the very contrary is the fact,—indeed it is really as beneficent as it is beautiful. Ivy never yet did damage to a structure that was not already damaged, in fact it most effectually shelters walls to which it adheres from damp and keeps them dry, if walls are moist it absorbs the moisture by suction : look under any great growth of ivy that has attached itself to a building, especially a crumbling ruin, and notice, even after a storm, how thoroughly it protects it from wet. Ivy often binds and holds together an ancient structure, that without its friendly shelter and support would long ago have tumbled down or crumbled away. Ivy is no parasite like some clinging plants, it simply attaches itself to a building for support, not for nourishment (unless the absorbing of damaging moisture can be considered so) ; it draws its sustenance honestly from its own roots out of the ground below.

Continuing on our way, the country began to open out and to give promise of becoming interesting. The scenery improved with each mile we progressed. Our road, bordered by spreading elms, began to wind about in a most delightful manner, enticing us on from bend to bend just to discover what fresh beauty was beyond. To our right we presently passed a well-wooded demesne, through the charmingly-undulating grounds of which a little toy-like river took its gleaming way, like a ribbon

of molten silver. How the gleam and sparkle of water enlivens a landscape; it is to it what the eye is to the human face. We managed to break one of the Commandments here by envying the owner the possession of this charming old English home, with its peaceful, sylvan scenery and picturesque surroundings. An old English home set in an English park, with its smooth sward, its ancestral rook-haunted elms, its sunny, old-fashioned gardens, seems to me to be an ideal abode, only to be excelled by that cosy country cottage with its thatched roof, its pretty porch covered with honeysuckles and roses, its ivy-grown walls, and its small, well-ordered garden of sweet-scented and colourful flowers; a cottage beloved of poets and novel-writers, but one so hard to find—out of an estate-agent's catalogue.

Some Scotch firs on a mound by the roadside here showed dark against the bright white summer sky, and gave quite a special character to the scenery at that spot. What an individuality there is about the Scotch fir. How even a small group of these hardy trees asserts itself in the soft southern landscape, with their dark-green needle-like leaves, rich red stems, and quaintly-shaped intertwined branches. I know of nothing so difficult to sketch in the way of trees as to trace correctly, with all their foreshortenings, the ramifications of the branches of an old Scotch fir: a man who can do that can do almost anything in the way of drawing. Just beyond this clump of firs we caught a peep to the right of the gables and clustering chimneys of another delightful old-time home, surrounded by a great

garden wall; and shortly after this we came to Chalfont St. Peter.

Chalfont St. Peter is a quiet and a charmingly unsophisticated place, too large almost to be called a village, and yet too small to merit the distinction of being termed a town. Here we had to cross the little river Misbourn by a ford right in the centre of the place. Close to the ford stands the church, with a great brick tower, the only merit of which is its massiveness; and near by the church is an old inn that looks as though it had seen busier days and more prosperous ones, for manifestly it had been an old coaching house, though still as of yore it opens its doors to any chance wayfarer: but the travellers by road, where are they? How long ago would it be, I wonder, since the last coach pulled up for its last change here?

Chalfont St. Peter is lighted, we noticed, by oil lamps, as doubtless it has been lighted for generations back; these are placed on the sides of the houses, here and there, apparently without much thought of order, but rather wherever a vacant space makes it convenient to fix one. It was a real pleasure, and an unexpected one, to come upon such a primitive place so near to London. The very fact of our having to cross a ford here delighted us, though, unfortunately, our horses took a different view of the affair and even pretended to be afraid of the shallow stream, and went so far as to shy in a playful manner; but the sound of the voice at once restored their confidence. It is astonishing what a quieting effect an encouraging word from their

master has over horses used to kind treatment. A nervous horse is only made the more nervous by the whip or being spoken harshly to. Natural nervousness is not a vice, in fact I think one can do almost anything with a good horse by gentleness; a really vicious animal had better be shot, he is not worth his keep.

This crossing a ford seemed such a primitive and picturesque incident of getting across country, and it charmed us because it contrasted so sharply with the usual everything-made-smooth mode of travelling of the present day; so practical and convenient and yet so monotonously uninteresting. Like stepping-stones and ferries, fords are not always desirable, however romantic and charming to the eye of an artist they may be. After heavy rain when a river is swollen stepping-stones are useless, being generally submerged; fords also under similar circumstances are not always easy, nor even very safe to cross (we were, indeed, once during a former tour nearly obliged to turn back owing to a ford being so deep after heavy rain as to be over our axles, the rush of water besides being uncomfortably strong). A ferry-boat, too, at the best is inconvenient, and apt to cause vexatious delay, but we can ill afford to lose these few remaining reminders of the romantic days gone by, when travel was full of picturesque incident.

Painters know well the beauties of such things. Look through the catalogue of any exhibition of landscape pictures, how suggestive are some of the titles of real rusticity and the picturesque side of country

life : titles such as "Stepping-stones, or the nearest way home," or "Crossing the ford," or "The old ferry, waiting for the boat," and the like, how they bring before us the poetry and charms of the unsophisticated country.

Noticing that the church door was open here, we pulled up to get a glance at the inside of the building. The interior is better than the plain and unpromising exterior would lead one to expect : the oak roof is good, but either wholly modern, or restored to such an extent as to appear so. The only thing that we found to interest us in the church was an old brass on the chancel wall, about a foot and a half high, to a priest who is represented in his vestments ; the inscription below is in black lettering, except the name "Robert Hanson," which is in red ; the date given is 1545. The chief interest of this brass lies in the fact that it is palimpsest. There are earlier brasses on the same wall dated respectively 1398 and 1446, but these have nothing special about them as far as we could see. A palimpsest brass, as my readers may know, is a brass that has already done duty as a memorial to the dead, and has been made, either by re-engraving a fresh figure on the plain unused side, or by altering the existing engraving without reversing the plate, to serve for another and different person than the one for whom it was first intended.

The earliest English brasses are mostly all palimpsest, and are generally found to have either German or Flemish inscriptions on their reverse side. At that early period the manufacture of

brass was not well, if at all, understood in England, consequently the metal was imported from abroad ; it is curious and not pleasant to find that the very memorials of the dead should have been stolen and exported for gain in this deliberate and wholesale manner, for the only other apparently reasonable theory to explain the fact of these earliest brasses being of foreign origin and palimpsest is the presumption that they were spoilt ones and were sent over on this account—an improbable explanation it seems at the best, considering the excellency of the original engraving.

At a later day when the monasteries were dissolved, a large number of the many brasses they contained got dispersed throughout the country, and these old plates were doubtless utilised by the engravers of the period for new figures by the simple expedient of turning them over and engraving a fresh device on the unused side ; sometimes, however, as I have before remarked, the engravers did not even trouble to do this, but boldly altered the figure and provided a fresh inscription, and in rarer cases still they did not even trouble to alter the figure, but boldly left it as it was and simply re-inscribed it to some one else, though the custom of dress was that of a former time and the fraud apparently obvious.

The brass to Robert Hanson in question shows a fashion in vestments of about a century earlier than the date given on it, the original simply flowing lines representing the folds of the dress have had shading added to them, and the pointed shoes

have been rounded to suit the later period ; the inscription being of course necessarily fresh and the only thing original and not simply altered about it. And oh ! the meanness and dishonesty of all this stealing and changing, this paltry appropriating of the memorials of the dead.

As it was the custom of the times for the brasses (or at any rate the more important ones) to be engraved in the lifetime of those whose memory they were to commemorate, it can hardly be supposed that the engraver was alone to blame in the matter or had sole knowledge of the fact of their former use. And amongst the many palimpsest brasses I know of certainly one to a bishop (or it may be an abbot, for it is difficult to tell which, as the inscription is missing) ; and surely a bishop or abbot should have known better than to have appropriated to his lordly self some one else's memorial, for even a bishop might have been honest !

Leaving Chalfont St. Peter, in a mile or so we came to a picturesque bit of rugged common by the wayside, for the land about was not cultivated to the last square inch. There were some ponds on this with reedy margins and stunted willow-trees bending over them. Here some gipsies had an encampment, their red-brown tents, ruddy ragged children romping around, together with the blue film of ascending smoke and the fragrant smell of wood burning, were in thorough harmony with this bit of wild waste. Desirable or undesirable, the gipsy and his belongings are eminently picturesque. Here we had simply a stretch of blue sky above with wandering

white clouds, a few stunted silvery-leaved willows, a pool or two of still water reflecting the brightness of the sky overhead, some old tents, a tethered horse, a few sun-tanned children and their elders more sun-tanned still, and the blue uprising smoke bringing earth and sky together, and the whole formed a perfect picture, complete in colour contrasts, form, and composition, and not wanting in a certain quiet interest.

A little farther on at four cross-roads we pulled the horses up under the shelter of some trees, and proceeded to make a short excursion on foot to Chalfont St. Giles, not a quarter of a mile away, and another about a mile farther on to the remote and almost forgotten Jordans, an ancient Quakers' burial-ground, memorable as being the last resting-place of William Penn the famous founder of Pennsylvania, who is with his family interred here.

Chalfont St. Giles is a sleepy, secluded, pretty village, well worth a visit if only to pay a pilgrimage to the humble little half-timbered cottage in which Milton sought refuge when fleeing from the Plague of London in 1665, and where he completed *Paradise Lost* and commenced *Paradise Regained*. Milton's cottage is probably but little, if at all, changed since he resided there: we discovered it at the end of the village, with a small garden in front; a garden both gay and sweet with homely old-fashioned flowers—lavender, stocks, sweet-peas, pinks, phlox, and deep-red roses. A flourishing vine was trained over the walls of the cottage, as well as some honeysuckle and a pear-tree; by the door was

a thrush in a basket-cage contentedly sunning himself. Entering, we found that only one room was shown, a little sitting-room in which it is supposed that Milton wrote his poems. It is as unpretending and even, I think, smaller than the low-ceilinged room at Stratford-on-Avon in which another famous poet first saw the light of day. Some relics are preserved here which, however interesting in themselves, have nothing to do with Milton, namely three cannon-balls of about five inches in diameter, and two others of about half that size. These, we were informed, were fired at Chalfont St. Giles church by Cromwell's soldiers when they were encamped in Silsden meadow after the battle of Aylesbury, and were found embedded in the timbers of the roof of the church when restored. By the way, the cannon-balls of Cromwell seem to be almost inexhaustible, judging from the number we have come upon in different parts of the country at various times. Wherever you travel in England you are sure to come upon them sooner or later; and is there, I wonder, a ruined castle that he did not destroy? Such a one would seem to me to be very much like "the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out." There are also six pikes shown here which we were given to understand were used by the Parliamentarian troops.

The village of Chalfont St. Giles has not much to attract the professional tourist, unless he chance to be an American; but it has a charm of its own to the lover of the old England that is fast passing away. The houses and cottages that go to make up

MILTON'S COTTAGE, CHALFONT ST. GILES



the little place are mostly old and quaintly irregularly built. One is still extant which local tradition has it was Milton's butcher's shop, and it is known by that title to this day. Many of the cottages we observed had gay-coloured flowers in their windows, fuchsias, geraniums, and china-asters being the favourites. And how well such flowers thrive in cottage windows! They seem as though they were specially intended to brighten the poor man's home and cheer his life of dull toil.

The ancient church is built of flint and has a lead roof. There is a curious approach to it under an old house, the beams of which above the entrance are black with age: the very antithesis this time-hallowed pile to the fashionable town place of worship. The peaceful-looking rectory is in perfect keeping with the gray old church and mellowed buildings around: a large roomy red-brick genuine old-fashioned house standing well back from the village street, with a spacious tranquil garden in front, which garden is surrounded by a massive moss-encrusted and lichen-stained wall, supported here and there by great buttresses, not exactly the sort of wall that the jerry-builder of to-day puts up to divide the back gardens (or yards, is it?) of his "desirable" villas. It would doubtless hurt his feelings, had he any, to behold such a waste of material, enough for half-a-dozen walls to enclose the same space; the way he goes to work.

Milton's cottage at Chalfont St. Giles seems to attract very few if any tourists, and in this respect strangely contrasts with Shakespeare's house at

Stratford-on-Avon,—that draws crowds every year, even from across the wide Atlantic. Chalfont St. Giles remains much as it was in Milton's time, and is still comparatively unspoilt, and therefore so pleasantly differing from the new look of the old Warwickshire town that gave birth to Shakespeare. I do not know, nor do I suppose, that there is an Englishman who has not heard of Stratford-on-Avon, but there are many I wot of who are ignorant of even the existence of Chalfont St. Giles.

We recognised one or two rather quaint 'bits' (to use an artist's expression) in the village, especially a pretty peep of one end of its sunny green, with the large pond beyond backed by trees, the solitary signpost by the roadside, and red-roofed cottages scattered around, from having seen paintings of the spot in more than one London art gallery. It is curious in driving across country how every now and then you come to a scene, or it may be only an old building, or a bridge, or a mill, that appears strangely familiar to you, though you have never been near the places before, from having seen them at some time represented in pictures. An ancient and delightfully romantic old English home that we came suddenly and unexpectedly upon this journey, we at once discovered to be a very old friend of ours on canvas, having seen it depicted more than once in well-known Academy pictures, of which more hereafter.

Jordans burial-ground, which we next visited, is a rough unkempt bit of land, situated in a remote green solitude ; it is carefully fenced from the road,

and surrounded by great pollard-trees, which give it rather an eerie look. There are only a few and unpretending tombstones in it, for the simple-minded early Quakers objected to them by reason of the fulsome accounts of the many virtues, supposed or real, of the dead engraved oftentimes thereon. In later years, however, the prohibition as to gravestones was removed, and they were allowed to be erected, provided that only the name of the underlying dead, date of birth and decease, were inscribed thereon. Some few Friends who had relatives buried there availed themselves of this opportunity to mark thus their graves, when they could be identified. Save for these few unobtrusive headstones there is nothing whatever to mark the last resting-spot of the dead.

Adjoining the ground is a prim and neatly-kept Meeting-house, with whitewashed walls and plain brick floor. The precise order and manifest care taken of the building is in strange contrast with the neglected-looking graveyard. Here, as I have before said, lies the famous founder of Pennsylvania with his two wives and some of his children, though neither tombstone nor monument marks the spot of sepulture. His name and fame are more lasting than any monument. Here also lies Thomas Ellwood, the friend of Milton, and many other Quakers of less renown. This lonely burial-ground, the very existence of which is now known to but few Englishmen, is visited annually by numbers of nineteenth-century pilgrims from far-off America. To them it is a sacred Mecca.

Returning to the dog-cart, we were soon again on our way. Doubly charming the bright sunlit country appeared after the gloomy desolate-looking burial-ground, with its severely unadorned primitive Meeting-house ; yet somehow that quiet God's acre impressed us, with its grass-grown unnoted graves, more even than the grandest cathedral in the supreme glory of its Gothic prime has ever done. Its unaffected simplicity strangely wrought upon our feelings.

A good road and a smart trot caused us quickly to get over the ground. There is something very exhilarating and inspiriting in the mere fact of moving rapidly through the fresh air : to a true lover of the road there is a certain indescribable charm in the easy swing of a well-built dog-cart or phaeton ; to such a one there is veritable music in the measured clatter, clatter of the horses' hoofs, in the rhythmic rattling of the chains, and the steady crunching of the wheels on the macadam, or gravel, as the case may be ; sounds varied and added to now and again by the cheerful notes of the horn as a sharp corner is negotiated, a sleepy waggoner overtaken, or a gateman at a level railway-crossing aroused. Very useful is the horn at these level crossings, especially where there is but little traffic, and the gate is consequently generally kept carefully shut, the man on duty not being always at his post ; indeed, we have more than once unearthed the party in charge, and supposed to be in constant attendance, digging potatoes in his garden near at hand, or at some other occupation, in blissful ignorance of a wayfarer seeking to get through

the obstructing gates, till a blast from the horn has suddenly made him aware of the surprising fact. Yes, level crossings, which, however, mostly abound in flat districts, are almost as great a nuisance to the traveller as were the old toll-gates, only in the former you have not to pay for the luxury of being delayed; for which small mercy, I presume, one should be duly thankful.

In a mile or so we reached a comfortable-looking farmstead with a great gabled old brown barn, having a mighty red-tiled roof reaching to within a few feet of the ground. Such grand roofs are not constructed now, more's the pity, for they are exceedingly picturesque, and proof against the worst storms and snow. The steading was approached by a sort of a lich-gate with a thatched shelter above, and the farmhouse was surrounded by a little colony of out-buildings irregularly grouped around. Such picturesque farmsteads are only to be found in England, and to perfection in the south and west. The solid farmhouses and outbuildings in the north country are more substantial and possibly more enduring, they are warm in winter and cool in summer, but they are harder featured, and not so suggestive of the poetry of country life as those of the south, which seem to take upon them something of the softer sunnier climate.

We soon now came to a humble wayside hostel, the Rose and Crown, to wit. This had rather a quaint conceit in the shape of a sign, or perhaps I should more correctly say, in an addition to it. At the top of the post that upholds the signboard, we observed

that the iron scroll-work was skilfully wrought into the bold outline of a crown. This was both effective and purposeful, and therefore attractive to look at; it suggested that the workman had an idea and carried it out. An original idea, however humble, is better far than the usual meaningless mass of ironwork that so often does duty for decoration, yet which does not adorn but only encumbers. It was a relief to find a bold departure from the common and endlessly-repeated forms that iron is tortured and twisted into for this and other purposes. I have noticed that iron railings of identically the same design as are erected in fronts of houses and terraces in various parts of London are also to be found in other towns in different and widely-separated parts of England. What a curse is this wearisome sameness that is spreading like a blight over the land, and is by the tyranny of cheap production stamping out all local inventiveness. London is not so beautiful that we care to find it repeated second-hand wherever we go. A design, if even in the first place good, which, alas! all designs are not, becomes, it must be confessed, somewhat oppressing, and you actually get to detest it when it meets you everywhere.

Our road now took us along a charming valley, bounded on either side by low beech-crowned hills, and from these wood-fringed far-stretching heights, fields of golden corn varied by green meadow-lands sloped gently down to the roadway. These rounded hills were dotted every here and there with cottage-homes and time-toned farmsteads that told of human

occupancy, and narrow white winding lanes wound over and about them, now in view, now hidden by clumps of dark trees or lost in the undulation of the ground, to reappear again leading the eye on and on till all trace of them is lost in the dim dreamy distance.

It was pleasant to watch the gleams of sunshine come and go over those rounded hills, now lighting up an old cottage unperceived before, now resting for a moment on an old mill, now lingering on a field of waving corn where men were busy reaping, now vanishing altogether for a time, when all the hillside would be left in cool gray shade ; anon it would be all bathed in golden light, sunshine and cloud shadows following one another in endless succession. How changeful are the aspects of the country on such a day, how varied are the effects of light and shade : now all the far-reaching landscape is clearly defined, now the distance becomes half lost in a soft silvery gray, now it is all aglow in the warm sunlight ; every moment the prospect assumes a fresh aspect. Who can ever weary of such a revelation of beauty ?

As we journeyed on through this pleasant peaceful land, half lost in a delightful day-dream, a bend in the road suddenly revealed to us the time-mellowed, medieval market-town of Amersham snugly nestled at the foot of the well-wooded hills, with green pastures around, through which wound a bright little sparkling stream. We stopped awhile to admire this thoroughly English-looking scene. What a charming picture the sleepy old town made

with its tiled and many-gabled houses clustered round its ancient church ; it looked so old, so typical of the past, there was such a marked absence of anything modern about it or within view, that we felt without much strain upon our imaginations we could easily fancy ourselves travellers of two centuries or more ago, even in those stormy days when Charles I. was fighting fruitlessly for his crown against the stern Puritans. If by some magic we could only have put back old Father Time so far, what an eventful and stirring tour we might have had !

CHAPTER III

An old-world town—A fine monument—A quaint epitaph—The Amersham martyrs—“The spot where the Pope was burnt!”—A picturesque street—An ideal farmstead—A homelike land—Railway-making—Little and Great Missenden—A very red lion—Honour End Farm—John Hampden—Wendover—A monkish tradition—An old-fashioned hostelry—Windmills—Aylesbury.

ARRIVING at Amersham, we were so charmed with its restful old-world look that we decided to make our mid-day halt there. The Griffin and the Crown each offered us a welcome, and as both seemed such pleasant past-time inns, it was hard to choose between them. So to settle the matter we selected the nearest one (which was a quicker way of deciding a doubtful point than tossing up). This chanced to be the Griffin, and we turned into its picturesque and ample courtyard, where doubtless, in years gone by, before the railway ruined road-traffic, many a wanderer like ourselves has baited his travel-stained horses.

Very picturesque looked that old courtyard with its dovecotes, haylofts, rambling stabling, and odds and ends of buildings. Fresh from London, where land is so valuable, and where the most is made of every foot of space, these spacious inn-yards always

make me envious of their unstinted wealth of room. Everywhere in and round about them there seems such a delightful superabundance of space, so refreshing after the ground-famine of large cities. They remind me somehow of the poor old woman from Manchester, who had a hard struggle to make both ends meet, and who when she saw the sea for the first time exclaimed, "Thank God, for once there's plenty of it." Nailed to the wall of one of the outbuildings here we observed the old and much weathered sign of the inn, past duty now. This ancient sign that greeted the eyes of the coaching generation is of wood; the new one that has taken its place is a much grander affair, and, the landlord told us, is of copper, which, we learnt from the same authority, is a far superior material for a sign, being lighter and not liable to warp or split like wood. So upon this valuable information we decided, should we ever go in for hotel-keeping, to have our sign of copper. Who shall say after this that one learns nothing on the road? Why we gathered unexpected information about all sorts of matters every day, to say nothing of the improvement in our geographical knowledge of our native land. I wonder, kind reader, if you know where the Teifi river is, through what counties it runs, and where it empties itself into the sea. Let me confess how scandalously ignorant I was, before we came upon it this journey, of its very existence; yet it is a fine and most beautiful river, abounding in salmon, with ruined castles on its banks, and towns as well, and flows through one of the most picturesque valleys

in Great Britain ; but as we shall come to it in due course, sufficient about the matter for the present. Now I have been wandering again, a very bad habit, unless by road. I noticed that the new griffin painted on the sign here is much more important and more fierce-looking than its predecessor ; it has a forked tongue, and spiky wings, —altogether a very formidable animal ; and it has the quality of looking as though it might really have existed, which is a good deal more than can be said for the majority of the representations of fabulous creatures.

After a simple repast, washed down by some cool clear ale, we set out, sketch-books in hand, to explore the place, leaving our horses to enjoy a prolonged and well-earned rest. A simple meal it was, still to our healthy appetites, keen from our long drive in the open air, it seemed one fit for a king, and the frothing ale to our thirsty palates was far more gratifying than the finest of champagne. In fact, being out in the open all day we found gave us alarming appetites, so that we needed no artificial inducements to enjoy our food, as the sad havoc we made of sundry joints of beef and legs of mutton amply proved.

As often was the case, hardly knowing why, we found ourselves gravitating towards the church of the place. This proved to be externally in the hands of the restorer ; and strange to relate, for once in our lives we did not regret the fact. The old exterior, manifestly the unhappy result of a former restoration, was of brick, and commonplace.

The ugly and uninteresting brickwork was being encased by flat flints with stone facings, the effect of which was good, and flints besides possess the merit of being the natural building material of the country. In the chalk hills round about flints abound, as farmers know to their sorrow, but nowhere near is there any stone, or clay for bricks. It would be well if architects and builders would thus take advantage of the nearest suitable material for the construction of the edifices they raise, so that they might employ what is indigenous to the country, and thus retain some of the local characteristics of a district, and preserve the special individuality of places, that gives so much of the charm and interest to travel.

Finding the chancel door of the church open, we went inside. Here we discovered monuments "to the right of us," monuments "to the left of us," monuments "in front of us," also a large chantry chapel full of monuments of various kinds and degrees of merit to the Drake family, with inscriptions in archaic English and puzzling Latin. One only, to a T. T. Drake, amongst the number was of any particular interest, a masterful piece of sculpture, chaste and dignified, representing a seated figure; and the sculptor, not ashamed of his work, has carved thereon his name and date—H. Weekes, A.R.A., 1854. The artist took the inanimate marble—

Smoothed and scraped,
That mass he hammered on and hewed at, till he hurled
Life out of death and left a challenge.

On an old mural tablet to a Catherine Best in another part of the church we noticed that Amer-sham was spelt "Agmondersham." In another church at Bicester we found "in the countie of Lankeyshire" engraved on a tombstone, which we presumed was intended to signify Lancashire. In those days everybody seems to have had his own idea of orthography, and to have been charmingly independent of all grammatical rules. What a golden age for schoolboys! I possess now some curious family relics in the shape of old school-books of about 1600, and though the spelling in these is often original and sometimes only antiquated, the sums I have noticed are correct without exception. Judging from these books, it does not seem to have been all work and no play then, for the commencement of nearly every page is headed by a wonderful piece of penmanship in the way of scrolls ending here and there in faces of animals unknown to natural history and heads of impossible birds.

As we were leaving this much-monumented church our attention was attracted by a small brass on the wall close to the door by which we had entered. The spelling of the inscription of this was a decided improvement upon many others of the period (looked at through modern spectacles), and the wording of it struck us as being sufficiently quaint to merit a place in our note-book. Here it is—

John Drake sonn of Francis Drake.
Had hee liu'd to bee a man
This inch had grown but to a span.
Nowe is he past all feare of paine.

'Twere sinn to wish him heere againe.
Vewe but the way by w^{ch} wee come,
Thow't say hee's best that's first at home.

Even in this it will be noticed, short as the inscription is, that the author has indulged in a little variety, by spelling the simple word "he" first with two e's, then with one, and finally with two again.

In the churchyard here we noticed a large flat iron tombstone (if it is allowable to use such an expression). The letters on this were raised, not incised as usual, and were as clear and sharp as the day it was laid down long years ago. In comparison with the ordinary tombstones, which suffer by exposure to the wind and weather so that they gradually waste and crumble away, an iron slab such as this is very durable, as it rusts but little. Had some of the old *gravestones* been of *iron* many a quaint and curious epitaph long since obliterated might still have been preserved to us, as is the case in some parts of Kent and Surrey, where many such iron slabs exist, reminders of the days when those pastoral counties were possessed of busy ironworks and a smoke-laden atmosphere.

Leaving the quiet old churchyard, we strolled down a meadow-path alongside of the clear and placid Misbourn, here merely a small stream (hardly indeed in its short and pleasant course much more, though given the dignity of river on our map). We took this walk in search of a field called "Stanley's," where a number of martyrs were burnt in "the brutal days of old," as a modern poet terms those undesirable times when it was dangerous to hold any private

opinion on matters religious or political, or at any rate to give it public expression. Then the Church endeavoured to enforce belief in her dogmas by such gentle and Christian-like persuasions as torture and the stake. Believe all or be burnt, she said. Now, having lost her temporal power, it is believe all or be damned. Well, that is some progress in four centuries,—something to be grateful for.

It may be remembered that Amersham was one of the many places that became notorious in the days happily gone by for the number of "heretics" who suffered death at the stake there. Amongst numerous others William Tylesworth was burnt at that town in 1506, and to show the barbarous refined cruelty of the times, his only daughter Joan was forced to set fire to the fagots, but nothing would induce this staunch hero to recant one word, or to change his faith one jot. John Scrivener and others were treated in the same inhuman manner, their little children being compelled likewise to fire the piles. An edifying spectacle in truth this burning of brave and noble men for the sole crime of daring to think for themselves; men who walked as proudly to the stake as ever went a warrior-king to receive a victor's crown. And after all how futile were these heartless burnings, for we are told that even a Romish priest who came, as an act of faith, to see some of these "wretched heretics" burnt, was so impressed with their noble bearing and unflinching faith, that he boldly renounced his creed, knowing well the consequences to himself, and was burnt in turn rejoicing that he was deemed worthy to suffer

with the rest. Stern stuff these old martyrs were made of. They had not the easy-going faith, conveniently accommodating itself to suit changing circumstances, of the famous Vicar of Bray, who truly acted with great worldly wisdom, but with little nobility.

As we could not make out which of the many fields was the one called "Stanley's," we asked our way of an old woman who was standing at her cottage door. "Stanley's, that be the field over yonder," she replied, pointing indefinitely into space. This information was not as precise as we could have desired, so we struck a bargain with her that she should go with us to the place for a shilling, thereby we hoped doing a small charity and at the same time saving ourselves an unprofitable scramble, as one field looked much like another and it was not easy for a stranger to decide which of these was the one of our quest.

Toiling up to the top of a hill, on a flinty bit of bare ground at the summit the old body came to a stop. "Here," she said, as soon as she recovered her breath, "*here is the spot where the Pope was burnt!*" This wholly unexpected bit of information for the moment took us quite aback. The poor rheumatic woman was quite serious, manifestly she did not understand our momentary look of astonishment, for she offered to go and fetch her husband if we thought it was not the right spot. "'Deed, sir, I would not deceive such a pleasant-spoken gentleman, 'deed I would not.'" What could we do but to reassure her that we quite believed that she had shown us the correct place. When we had pacified her, she

continued, "Yes, this is the very spot, and a good thing too ; he deserved burning the Pope, that 'er did." We could not gather whether she thought that there was still a Pope, or whether she concluded that there was only one, and that he (or she) was burnt for good and all. Obviously her history was a little mixed, her youth had been unblest by schoolboards, and like most people not over well informed, she was chary of saying anything to reveal her want of exact knowledge.

Truly, travellers by road, even in this enlightened nineteenth century, come upon strange facts. It was almost as embarrassing an experience as one we had on a previous journey, when, unable to find the clerk to show us over a most interesting old church containing a curious tomb of a knight Crusader (of which we caught a glance through a window), a good-natured woman, to whom we had unavailingly applied for guidance in our search, noticing our disappointment, begged us not to mind, as she had the key of the Primitive Methodist chapel and would gladly show us over that !

The spot where the Amersham martyrs suffered was, as I have said, on the top of a low hill, so that the burnings could be seen by all the town. Tradition has it that nothing will grow on this spot. Certainly, if we were shown the right place, it is a very barren one, the chief crop on it appears to be flints ; possibly it may have been always barren thus, the land in close proximity being poor at the best, and might therefore of old have been selected for the purpose as being of but small value.

As we drove leisurely out of Amersham we noticed its quaint and ancient market-house, with its bent and weathered clock-turret above and pillared open space below. This bit of weather-stained old-time building gave an added interest to the picturesquely irregular street; a drowsy straggling street, the houses of which are all old-fashioned, oddly-built, time-toned, and delightful to behold. Some are built this way, others in another manner, to suit the special requirements, or sometimes whims, it may be, of their first possessors; others again to make the best of the situation. Some have high-pitched gables, some low; their windows vary in form and size and are placed where required for light and convenience, not for uniformity or outside show. The chimneys too all vary in shape and height; the result being an irregular picturesqueness and a naturalness that charms the lover of the unconventional. There is no formality, no sameness anywhere, the skyline is agreeably broken by gables and dormers and clustering stacks of chimneys, all is quaint and original in this town of ancient quiet, which has the repose of centuries upon it.

An ancient homely town that still fortunately retains its old-world appearance and flavour, a delightfully unprogressive place that has no raw-looking new houses to mar its restful mellowness, no outlying smart villas to spoil its poetic harmony; a town that seems neither to have grown nor to have diminished in size for long years. In fine, it has the rare charm of being finished and unimproved

and owes nothing to the modern builder; a delightfully dreamy unsophisticated old place, quite unaffected by the rush and bustle of the outer world, and one that has strangely remained unchanged in an age of change.

Just where the town ended and the country began (and how charming it is to get out of town at once into the real country thus) stand two specially attractive houses placed at a pleasant distance from the wide street, with something of a Dutch character about them, and beyond these again just over the borderland of houses we caught a glimpse of a captivating old Elizabethan home, a house of many gables and possessing an ample hospitable-looking porch that seemed to speak a welcome. This erst dignified mansion we imagined from its surroundings to be now a farmstead, and an ideal one it seemed to us, set in the midst of green fields with the sunshine resting on it. Such a farmstead is the very poetry of country life.

Soon we passed to the left a very fine park, with a large sheet of water gleaming with a silvery brilliancy through the trees, and then we had a good view of the stately mansion backed by sheltering woods. This we found from our map to be Shardeboes, the ancient family seat of the Drakes, whose monuments fill the chantry chapel attached to Anersham church. The road skirted the park for a mile or more, and we were struck by the variety of trees the latter contained—oaks, elms, ashes, chestnuts, limes, planes, and others, besides many large thorns.

The cottages by the wayside now were frequently

built of flint, some were in the picturesque half-timbered style, an acceptable change from the monotonous brick we were so accustomed to. Later on we struck upon a stone country and took it with us nearly all the way to St. Davids, and a greater portion of the way back. This change of building materials and the style and character of buildings was very interesting to note.

We passed now through a pretty wooded country, a land of green meadows, rippling streams, and ancient farmsteads; a homelike lovable land, with alluring footpaths wandering over it to distant farmsteads and gray old churches, and far away to the blue-gray hills. A typical picture of rural England. But the restful beauty and pastoral peacefulness of these green fields and still waters were sadly marred by the great bare embankments and the deep ragged cuttings of a new railway in the course of construction. These ugly eyesores, however, gave us a good idea of what the then novel iron ways must have seemed like to our ancestors as they beheld them when first inaugurated, and we could well understand their complaints of, "Walls of mud, scarred cuttings, and damp black tunnels," before Time, that gentle healer, had the opportunity of softening their harder features down by the growth of grass and other greenery, and the mellowing influences of weather. In truth, a railway in the progress of making through a pretty country, with its long lines of barren embankments, harsh cuttings, and dismal vistas of gaunt earthworks driven through the soft green fields, is about the most ruthless spoiler

of sylvan scenery I know of ; it tyrannises over the whole prospect by its assertive unsightliness, moreover it extends so far that the eye cannot possibly avoid it, the landscape is cut in two and utterly disfigured for a time.

As we drove along we observed frequent notices as to the diverting of by-roads and footpaths, and worse still, more than one inviting bridle-track—doubtless from time immemorial a convenient right of way for the inhabitants around—was closed by a despotic notice board with the brief and but too suggestive inscription thereon, “ This path is stopped.” But who troubles about the convenience of the poor cottager or poorer labourer, they are not represented in the Parliamentary Committee, and if they do not like their rights of way being stopped, they can dislike it, for is not this a free country, and are not they free-born Britons ?

Continuing on our way, we presently passed Little Missenden to the left of the main road. It struck us as being, from the glance we had, a pretty hamlet of red-roofed houses gathered round a fine old church. And shortly afterwards we found ourselves in Great Missenden, a large, long, one-streeted village, or small town, of the type known as thoroughfare towns in the old coaching days. Here a comfortable-looking inn almost tempted us to call a halt, but we resisted the temptation, arguing that, however much we might desire to do so, it would never do to stop at every inviting wayside hostelry we came upon, or our journey might not be completed till the chilly winter-time.

Houses of entertainment, both for man and beast, appeared to abound in Great Missenden. Their number astonished us; where their patrons came from we could not imagine. Their many quaint signs projecting above the wide roadway on their ancient twisted iron supports were quite a feature of the place. One of these signs struck us as being very effective, namely that of the Red Lion—a very red lion by the way—rejoicing in a bright coat of vermillion enough to enrage the mildest disposed bull. This bold creature was cut out of metal to proper form, as established by the conventional usages of signboard-designers, whose ideas of anatomy are, to say the least, peculiar and curiously at variance with nature.

A mile or so to the left of Great Missenden is Honour End Farm, which is historic ground; a monument upon it recording the fact that it was for this farm “John Hampden was assessed 20/- ship money, levied by command of the king without authority of law August 4th, 1635.” This amount that stern Puritan patriot refused to pay as being illegally demanded of him in defiance both of law and custom. John Hampden was no cheap patriot glorying in the easily won crown of a nineteenth-century political martyr. He was one of the foremost of those

Sons of men who sat in council, with their Bibles round the board,
Answering Charles's royal missive with a firm “Thus saith the
Lord.”

If there is any truth in the old doggerel rhyme—

'Tring, Wing, and Ivinghoe
From the Hampdens did goe
For striking the Black Prince a blow'—

it would appear that at an earlier time a Hampden forfeited some of his possessions for an act of defiance, the rights of which, however, are lost in the dim past. Ivinghoe, by the way, Sir Walter Scott acknowledged suggested to him the title of Ivanhoe.

Bigoted possibly Hampden was, defective in many things doubtless, narrow-minded even, it may be; but great, and noble, and devoted withal, possessed of a hero's soul, doing all he did from a strict sense of duty, so that his very faults seem virtues, his deeds above reproach. It must be remembered that he "found himself born into the midst of a terrible moral and political struggle, in which all that a man holds dear—all that makes man's life—was in peril of being lost." You cannot rightly judge of any great man's actions unless you can figuratively put yourself in his time and place, and have besides some small measure of his greatness, and thus see the world as he saw it. Stern he was, but the age had need of firmness; men do not play, and sing, and dance, and make merry when fighting in the battle's van for all they hold most dear—

And think, if his lot were now thine own

How laxer muscle and weaker nerve
And a feebler faith thy need might serve.

Not that John Hampden needs any apology for his acts from any liberty-loving Englishman; he fought

and gave his life for Freedom in the days when Freedom's friends were few. A man of large landed property and of an ancient family, he had all to lose and nothing to gain by the course he took, yet he has been called "fanatical," and many hard things have been said of him by those who should know better, and whose names will be forgotten when that of John Hampden will still live as one of the noblest of Englishmen.

But enough of this wandering, let us back to the dog-cart and the pleasant country roads ; and a very pleasant treeful country it was after Great Missenden. In a few miles we came to a humble hostel called the Half Way House. The sign of this consisted of a painting of the inn (as correctly drawn as the village 'prentice hand could do it). This is the first time that we have noticed such a conceit, it struck us as quite a novelty in signs ; but the representation had the disadvantage of having the reality at hand to compare with it.

Soon now the little old-fashioned town of Wendover came into sight, a short distance before which we noticed its gray time-worn church curiously buried in a hollow. Why thus lowly situated and so far away from the place, I cannot say ; but tradition can, and solves the problem in its own ready fashion. It would appear (according to the tradition aforesaid) that the original site for the church was chosen on an eminence overlooking the town, and there the monks began to build it, but every morning on returning to their work, they found the stones that they had placed in position the day previously

had overnight been removed to the spot where the church now stands. Thereupon the monks were much concerned amongst themselves as to whether this removal were the work of God or the devil. At last, however, they came to the conclusion that God was master of the devil, and that Satan would not be permitted to interfere with the foundations of God's temple. The inference therefore was that the removal of the stones was a sign to them to build their church on the spot to which the materials had been so mysteriously conveyed; and there the church stands to the present day. And with such plain evidence before them as to its situation who would be bold enough to deny the truth of the tradition?

In sharp contrast with the solemn old church, close by the roadside stands a new-looking Baptist chapel, a structure on the lines of a square brick house with sash windows, only with the addition of a toy sort of a steeple on one side, verily realising the old Puritan term "steeple house." This ugly freak in building bears on its front the dates 1683 and 1883, presumably the years in which it was first built and restored.

Wendover we found to be another homely little town, possessing many charming time-toned houses of ancient date, with curious gables, high dormers, and picturesque porches. In its quaint main street stands the Red Lion inn, a regular old-fashioned hostelry with a genuine flavour of the past about it, a hostelry suggestive of posting, coaching, and the knights of the road. But now that Wendover

is to have the blessing of a railway, it will doubtless by degrees have its primitive picturesqueness improved away.

Unfortunately, progress ever seems at enmity with beauty: the black fussy locomotive takes the place of the smart and gaily-coloured mail coach; the grimy engine-driver that of the genial whip; the shriek of the steam-whistle is not an improvement upon the cheerful toot-to-to of the horn; the modern company-managed hotel (where you lose your individuality in a number) is but a poor exchange for the comfortable inn where you are known by name, and the landlord takes an interest in your welfare. But I will not continue; these comparisons are depressing and profit nothing. "Forward" is the motto of the century; we are too busy to consider the beautiful, a new and wonderful invention is more to us than the most lovely work of art. We hardly even ever build the homes we live in, but take them ready made, and fit into them as best we can.

Just out of Wendover we saw our first windmill this journey, and delighted we were to meet one of our old friends again. A windmill always gives a feeling of life to a landscape; it is the only building that has any movement—quite an anomaly in buildings. Not only do the sails themselves move, but frequently the whole structure does, to face the wind from whatever quarter it may come. And what a fascination there is in watching the giant sails whirling round and round in their never-completed journey, now white in sunshine, anon darkly silhouetted against the bright sky!

Alas! these picturesque features of the country are slowly being superseded by steam-mills, that do not depend upon the wind, which with their tall chimneys and trail of black smoke are blots on the landscape; whereas the old windmills are of their very nature eye-pleasing, they so essentially belong to the country, and are so intimately associated with rural life. One cannot imagine an ugly windmill; but a steam-mill—well, ask an artist what he thinks of it?

It is wise when on the road to look round now and again, by doing so you obtain a change of prospect, and often gain an unexpectedly picturesque peep. Thus in glancing back we had a charmingly poetic view of Wendover, with its many windows reflecting the golden sky (for the sun was setting in a glory of crimson and gold in the west). The ancient time-dimmed houses of the snug, compact, little town, with their changeful outline, were half lost in a mystery of grays; here and there a gable showed plainer than the rest; and on one old building we caught the metallic glint of a restless weather-vane. In the soft glow of the uncertain light the sleepy old town made quite a picture, all things were not sharply defined as in the garish daytime, no commonplace features asserted themselves, there was a dreamy dimness about the prospect that left some play for the imagination.

As it was getting late and we had no desire to be belated on the way, we took advantage of a good road to hurry on, and in due course reached Ayles-

bury, where we took up our night's quarters at the George. That we were here in the centre of a rich agricultural country was agreeably brought to our remembrance by a plentiful supply of cream with our tea. And so ended our long and interesting day's stage.

CHAPTER IV

A diminutive church—Waddesdon—A curious shroud-brass—A wandering knight—Quaint signboard inscription—The trials of the amateur photographer—The spoiling of scenery—A rural thatched inn—A level land—Sky scenery—A wild common—The yeoman of old—Bicester—The old inn *versus* the modern hotel—Country curiosity—The amenities of the road.

WE were up and on our way betimes next morning. Another fine day, with a rising barometer and a bright blue cloud-flecked sky overhead, made us eager to continue our pleasant pilgrimage under such favourable conditions, and, if the truth must be told, Aylesbury offered few attractions wherewith to detain us. An agricultural show was in progress; the streets were crowded with farmers, men on horseback, shouting drivers, and bewildered cattle. We were not sorry to get out of all the din and bustle into the peaceful restful country.

After driving for about three miles, we stopped to inspect a diminutive church curiously standing all alone in the middle of a large grass field, its lowly God's acre being surrounded by a rough stone wall. Strangely enough, there appeared to be no footpath to the church from any direction, nowhere did the grass show any signs of a regularly trodden way. Crossing the meadow, we found the church

to have a deserted look ; the one gravel walk, confined to the enclosed graveyard and leading simply from the gateway to the porch of the old building, was weed-grown and apparently but little used. The church itself, however, was in good repair : the chancel, contrary to usual custom, had no window at the end, but terminated in a plain wall supported by two great buttresses ; there was a squat little belfry just raised above the roof, looking as much like a pigeon-house as a belfry, perhaps more so. If there is such a thing as an eccentric building, this one was decidedly eccentric : although small, it had a character all its own that asserted itself and claimed attention. But what specially charmed us about it was its gloriously tinted roof, but this it owed to Nature not to Art ; it was absolutely golden with lichen,—a rich red gold when the sun shone on it ; a wonderful bit of colour, not to be described in words, nor, as I found, to be reproduced by me in paint, though I had the brightest pigments in my box. Some of the ancient glass in one of the windows was, we noticed, iridescent from age, and glowed with all the colours of the rainbow wherever the sun caught it, like a giant opal.

Leaving this curious little church, and after traversing a pleasing stretch of country, we found ourselves in the picturesque village of Waddesdon. Here Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild has a palatial modern mansion placed in a noticeable position on an eminence ; but somehow this grand home struck a note out of harmony with its rural surroundings. It is in the landscape truly, but not of it ; it looks

A BUCKINGHAMSHIRE ROAD



W. H. Worley, delv.

too new and grand ; it asserts itself overmuch. The grounds around are too neat and well kept, the iron gateways too fresh with paint and gilt, to be in keeping with the mellow, homelike country around. The finest palace ever built will not for a moment compare for picturesqueness with an old farmstead, or even a humble thatched cottage. Out of either an ancient farmstead or a lowly cottage an artist might make a charming picture—what can he do with a grand new palace ?

At Waddesdon we found in the White Lion a clean, unpretentious, but very comfortable little hostel, the landlady of which hastened to supply our wants within, whilst without the ostler took good care of our horses. The signboard here had the representation of a white lion upon it, not as usual standing alone, but walking on a plain with palm-trees around and hills beyond for a background. It struck us as singular this portrayal of a *white* lion in such natural surroundings,—that is, as natural as the signboard-painter could make or imagine them, for doubtless he had never seen a palm-tree growing in his life, possibly never a mountain ; but he did his best evidently, and no man can do more. Indeed, I have seen mountains and trees worse painted in pictures that are hung on the walls of rich men's houses. It is not everybody who has money who can discern between true and false art. But what can one expect when a certain well-known professional gentleman once gave an order for a landscape to be painted so many feet long and so many high to fill up a vacant space in one of his

rooms? I can vouch for this fact, as I was offered the doubtful honour of the commission. But to return to the signboard: this was a naturalistic departure from what generally obtains which we did not approve; we felt that we much preferred the good old-fashioned, if impossible, white or red heraldic lion that so long has done the duty of welcoming travellers to an inn. Possibly our preference is due to past familiarity and associations.

Waddesdon boasts of a grand old church, gray with age, having the bloom of centuries upon it; a solemn building that speaks in the present of the past. This is approached through a lichgate and by an avenue of chestnuts. Its massive tower supported by mighty buttresses much impressed us: a grand mass of masonry this, weather-worn and crumbling, but strong and substantial still, showing signs of age, but not of weakness. The summer suns of forgotten years have lightened it up; the winter storms of centuries have beaten upon it—but only to beautify it. Time has tinted it with countless hues; lichens and mosses have found a home on its rough gray stones; grasses and ferns have crept into many a crevice thereof, the greens and grays blending into a perfect harmony of tones; not a square inch of this great tower but tells the chances and changes of its long life's history.

It takes Nature hundreds of years to mellow and adorn a building thus; it is sad to think how soon all such hoary antiquity can be scraped and chiselled away, as though it had never been, by the destructive hand of the restorer, to whom nothing beautiful is

sacred. An old building can quickly be made to look like new, but a new building can never be given the rare glamour and indescribable charm of age.

Within the church we found much to interest us. An old stone tomb to a knight, with his hand on his sword, and his moustache curled so carefully that we judged the ancient warrior must have been quite a "masher" of the period, for these stone and marble effigies are portraits more or less truthful of the underlying dead. But of far more interest were some quaint brasses that we discovered on the floor. These were on the whole in an excellent state of preservation, the lettering on some of them being as legible and as sharp now as when first cut, in spite of the tread of generations of worshippers. One brass more curious than the rest especially attracted our attention. This represented a man in a shroud with an opening that revealed his emaciated body. Truly a ghastly memorial of the dead; but these horrible shroud-brasses seem to have been a common custom of the time, for we have come upon a number of them in many different parts of the country, especially in the eastern counties, where they are very numerous. Presumably they were intended as a reminder to the living of their mortality. The inscription of this particular brass was deeply incised, and yet the lettering appeared strangely raised, so much so indeed that we had to rub our hands over it to be convinced that such was not the case. The inscription, which is to a former priest, is curious, and we thought it worth copying. It runs as follows:—

Some tyme I was a persone here
 Of this churche of Wadsdon
 Above the space of forty yere
 Elect unto the ffirst porcyon
 A thowsand ffyve hundred forty and ayght
 The xxvij day of Nouember
 Nede must I goo God graunt me ye way straught
 Com was my tyme I myght tary no lenger
 Hugh Bristowe was my name
 I was so called of many a one
 By crewell deth the body was slayne
 And brought to my grave under this stone
 Besecheyne Criste to have mercy
 On my pore sowle and all Cristen
 Delyeryny you of your Chartye
 To say our lordes prayer. Amen.

Parson
= persona ecclesiae.

"Persone" in the first line must, I presume, be read as parson; but sometimes of old the village priest was called the person of a place, as being the most important individual there.

Amongst the other brasses here is an interesting one, dated 1543, showing a shorn priest "Ricardi Huntyngdon," in vestments and holding a chalice, the folds and details of his robes being most painstakingly and artistically rendered. Another old brass to "Robart Pygott & Marye his wife" is noticeable on account of the inscription, which is cut deeply and well,—all but the dates of their respective deceases, which are merely scratched on the surface. Doubtless, as was often the case, this brass had been laid down in the lifetime of those whose memory it was intended to preserve, so that the dates of death were of necessity left vacant, to be filled in afterwards by local workmen to the best

of their ability ; and in this case poor was the best. It should, however, be borne in mind that so tough and excellent is the composition of these early brasses, that it is a matter of difficulty to make an impression of any sort upon them even with a sharp chisel, so that the slight nature of the added dates need not much be wondered at. Think of all the wear and tear many of these old brasses on church floors have undergone, and still have to undergo, and yet how little have they suffered during all the centuries that have passed since they were first laid down.

Brasses are perhaps the most enduring of all the various memorials to the dead ; they also possess the rare merit of being suitable to almost every rank and station of life, befitting equally the lordly bishop and the humble yeoman. Stone crumbles in time, monuments of alabaster and marble are for the noble few or ostentatious wealthy, moreover they are easily chipped and offer great temptations for wandering 'Arrys to cut their worthless initials thereon, should they have the opportunity. A good brass happily defies them and their kind, only, alas ! it can with comparative ease be lifted bodily from its matrix and stolen.

From the churchyard we had a glorious view over green meadow-lands and hedgerowed fields right away to a long low range of wooded hills that bounded the hazy horizon. After the dim religious gloom of the sombre interior of the old fane, this peep of the fresh open country, all bathed in the warm noon light, was quite a relief. The sudden

contrast enhanced the brightness of the sunlit earth and wide blue sky.

As we were leaving we noticed on the outside of the porch a plain stone slab inserted into the wall. This was briefly inscribed :—

Sir Roger Denham, Kt.

Died 1490.

Found at Eythorpe

Aug. 24, 1887.

Reinterred by

Alice de Rothschild.

It struck us that very possibly there might be some interesting history connected with this if we could unearth it, but there was no one about from whom we could gather any information, so we reluctantly returned to our inn, and ordering the horses to be put to, once more proceeded on our way. At the outskirts of the village we chanced to come upon a gentleman in a clerical garb talking to a cottager. We felt sorry to intrude upon their conversation, which doubtless was not of vast interest to the clergyman, still, as he appeared to be the very person of all others the most likely to give us the information we desired, we pulled up and ventured to question him upon the matter. "Oh yes," he readily replied to our query, "there is a little history connected with the memorial. I can tell you all about it. Miss Rothschild observed a spot on the lawn at Eythorpe where the grass did not grow well, so she ordered it to be dug up and returfed. In doing this the gardener came upon an ancient coffin just below the surface of the ground;

this was found to contain human bones, and had upon it a brass plate with "Sir Roger Denham, Knyght : Obit 1490," engraved thereon and still legible. Miss Rothschild upon being informed of the discovery had the coffin and its contents re-interred in the churchyard here, and ordered the slab containing the inscription you noticed to be placed on the wall above." The clergyman went on further to inform us that this knight was originally buried in the chancel of the church, but that a special chantry chapel (long since destroyed) was built at Eythorpe to receive his body, which was in due course removed there; but now, he said, "the poor unfortunate man is back again at Waddesdon, only he is worse off than ever, for now he has to put up with a resting-place outside the church instead of in the chancel as at first. Rather hard lines upon the poor old fellow!" Let us trust, however, that the brave knight (I presume of course that he was brave) rests none the less peacefully, though his noble bones be laid without in the cold churchyard amongst ordinary plebeian dust. Possibly amongst the common herd there may be some of nature's noblemen to keep him worthy company, some who might have been perchance both great and noted but for the accident of birth. On the authority of an epitaph to a needy yeoman which we copied elsewhere, it would not seem to matter so very much after all where one is buried. The yeoman thus states his views:—

Here lies I at the chancel door,
Here lies I because I'm poor.

The farther in the more to pay,
Yet here lies I as warm as they.

Driving on, a few miles of pretty country, with nothing special to note on the way, brought us to a humble but picturesque wayside inn of one story, with large dormer windows in its red-tiled roof. It had the usual signpost before it, but the inscription on the signboard was somewhat original; it was moreover brief and much to the point. It ran as follows:—

Mary Uff
Sells good ale
And that's enough.

Why certainly! and long may Mary Uff live to sell good ale. The little inn with its creeper-covered front, projecting porch with seats on either side, its horse-trough and old-fashioned stone steps for riders to mount their horses, made such a pleasing picture that we could not help stopping to take a photograph of it; and a very charming photograph it would have made, but for the fact that whilst we were getting our apparatus ready eleven people, men, women, and children—I counted them all afterwards on the negative—appeared, as if by magic, on the scene. On our arrival there was not a soul visible. This large party at once proceeded to place themselves in conspicuous positions, right in front of the building, and they all stood in a formal row looking straight at the camera, with the manifest intention of being “took.” And to take them all we were compelled, or else forgo our picture. The photograph turned out a very

good one technically, but, as might be expected, it was not a success from a picturesque point of view, owing to the unwelcome presence of the self-posed figures.

A painter in sketching a subject can conveniently omit anything that displeases him, but the photographic lens is impartial to a fault and represents everything in front of it, desirable or undesirable, beautiful or ugly. This faithful rendering of all things by the camera is sometimes very temper-trying. Later on in the journey we took a photograph of a row of charmingly quaint old houses that stand in the curious and ancient town of Burford; these were most interesting, but the picture was utterly spoilt artistically by the reproduction of several prominent posters that were attached to the fronts of the buildings, which set forth all too plainly the virtues, actual or supposed, of Somebody's soap, Someone else's pills, and Another Person's ointment. I may observe for the benefit of the advertisers that I made a mental note on the spot never to use that particular soap, nor to take those pills, nor to employ that ointment. This disfiguring of country towns by huge highly-coloured placards is becoming a regular nuisance, and even they are intruding their most unwelcome presence in the country, for we observed them now and then stuck on the mile-stones, palings, gates, trees, and walls. This commercial spoiling of scenery is little short of scandalous. But what does the manufacturer care for the spoiling of scenery so long as he can advertise his wares? At

one spot we actually saw an advertisement boldly pasted over the arms of a signpost, and effectually hiding the directions thereon. Considering that this was carrying enterprise a little too far, I ventured to tear off the objectionable poster, not only for my own benefit but for that of other travellers who might prefer the information as to the way they should go rather than to learn the presumed merits of some wonderful sheep-wash (which is of no value to those who have no sheep to wash), and who simply desire to know to where the different roads lead. But enough, I have had my grumble. Should any one who reads this book ever employ billstickers to go about country to advertise their wares on gates, palings, and the like, I hope they will not do it any more. The chance, however, of any such over-enterprising people reading this humble protest is, I fear, remote, and should they do so the chance that they will heed it remoter still. But the unexpected does sometimes happen in this world; once even a friend of mine told me that he loved his mother-in-law: after that who can say what may or may not happen?

Some distance farther on our way we noticed another humble little inn, with homely thatch for a roof. This rejoiced in a title fresh and unfamiliar to us—the Haymaker's Arms, to wit. Curiously enough the sign of this was by the roadside, but the inn itself (perhaps I should be more correct in saying public-house) was situated some distance off and was reached by a footpath over a field.

Across a wide and lonely level country our

road now took us, straight ahead of us for miles it stretched in a wearisome monotony; the track, for it was little better in parts, was stony and rough in places, as though but little used. The long lines of the road narrowing in the distance, and the rows of trees on either hand lessening in apparent size to the horizon, made quite an object-study in perspective. We were traversing the ancient Akeman Street, which goes as direct and straight from place to place as its builders could make it; a bit of engineering that would rejoice the heart of a railway contractor. We crossed from time to time many little streams and a few large ones over as many bridges of various kinds. Some of these bridges were constructed of wood, some of brick, but the majority of more enduring stone.

A far-stretching low-lying tract of Dutch-like country was all around us, with a great expanse of sky above. A flat land has always the compensation, as a set-off for any seeming monotony, in its glorious open sky-scapes, so space-expressing and suggestive of the illimitable, so abounding in change and revelations of cloud-scenery and gorgeous golden sunsets. Dwellers in such districts are compelled to see the beauties of these, they are always so in evidence, for therein the sky tyrannises over the landscape. A great deal has been written and said in disparagement of the English climate and its cloud-laden skies, but why should it not have the virtue of its supposed faults? A bare cloudless sky is intolerably monotonous; it lacks variety and interest, the charm of movement and never-ceas-

ing change. How delightful it is to simply watch the slow birth and progress of a summer shower, now blotting out the distant blue horizon with a mist of pearly-gray, now steadily advancing, the sun shining before and beyond it; now the slanting lines of rain become visible, and whilst you are looking, the light behind grows stronger and the silvery cloud and rain-lines gradually vanish, and all is blue sky and sunshine again. We too little regard the beauties of the sky above us. This and the sea alone are beyond the power of man to spoil; they are the same now as they were untold ages ago.

But if flat the country around us was by no means devoid of interest nor wanting in the picturesque; to the quiet observer of nature it had its own special beauties, though of an unsentimental and unassuming kind.

'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste
Of all beyond itself.

A freshening wind was blowing from the south, and the trees and the long lank grasses and reedy water-plants were bending before it; it rippled the sluggish streams and placid pools of water, causing them to glitter and sparkle in the sun. There was movement and life everywhere. Strange birds, strong of wing, flew across our path ever and again, now rising sharply upwards, now swooping downwards, anon whirling round and round, in an apparently purposeless fashion, as though for the very joy of it. Surely the freedom of a bird on the wing is a delightful and a wonderful thing. How it sails and sweeps in grand curves through the air,

the very poetry of motion, rising and falling at will, and all without any seeming exertion!

The wind came from afar; wild, fresh, and sweet it greeted us, a warm yet bracing wind that raised our spirits by its rough breath, a tonic both for body and brain. It was almost like a sea-breeze, so cool and strong it blew, with something of a gathered scent that reminded us of the ozone-laden air of the coast. The sound too of the wind rustling the foliage and swaying the branches of the bending trees was suggestive of the wish-wash-wash of the sea as it breaks upon a pebble-strewn beach. We closed our eyes, and it required no great stretch of imagination to fancy ourselves, far away inland though we were, on some distant wave-beaten shore.

As all things good or bad are bound to do in this world, at last our long level stretch of road came to an end, just where a large substantial stone bridge spanned a little stream. There seemed a great inconsistency between the size and strength of that bridge and the smallness of the stream, but doubtless the builder thereof knew what he was about; he had to provide for winter floods as well as summer drought.

Here there was a wild bit of common to our left whereon thistles flourished mightily; this was crossed by a rutty winding road marked out by white posts on either side, we presumed to show the way in floods or snow. It is not often in England that posts are needed thus, and when needed so thoughtfully provided.

During our drive we observed a good deal of land apparently going out of cultivation, or at any rate much neglected, if we might judge by the fine crops of weeds in many of the fields we passed,—a sad sight. This set us pondering over the strange fact that land should be allowed to go out of cultivation in this over-peopled England, and that in some counties there should be a lack of farm hands, whilst our large cities are crowded with men seeking work, and who but serve to add to the competition that grows keener and keener notwithstanding the emigration that takes place. I am no politician, I am thankful to say, but it does seem to me that there must be something wrong somewhere for land to lie practically idle and yet that we should keep on importing at great annual cost produce that such land would yield, to a greater or lesser extent, if properly tilled. Perhaps it would be well for once to try back and see if the magic of ownership of small freeholds would tend to remedy the evil,—to get back if possible, and before it be too late, the good old-fashioned yeoman, the backbone of our England of yore, when "to do yeoman's service" was a proverb full of pregnant meaning.

It has always struck me as one of the most unfortunate outcomes of the present times, the worst possible solution of the land question, indeed no solution of it at all, this gradual disappearance of the sturdy yeoman of history, a disappearance that has been made only too manifest to us when on our extended home-travels through England. Landlords, from pride of possession or other causes,

have for generations past been busy increasing their estates, have added acre to acre by the purchase of small outlying properties wherever opportunity may have occurred, and thus have the yeoman's small holdings been gradually but surely absorbed. A tenant-farmer with rent to meet, and with nothing to fall back upon when times are bad, is but a poor exchange for the independent, hard-working, small freeholder of the past. A farmer of to-day paying rent cannot make a livelihood out of his land unless he lives on the worst and sells his best.

Leaving the thistle-strewn common, we passed some thatched and whitewashed cottages suggestive of Devonshire; then we came to a gentle hill, on the top of which, ruined, gaunt, and desolate, with bent and broken sails, stood two old windmills. There was a weird look about these two lonely mills with their great black outstretched arms that impressed us with a vague sort of feeling, very real but not to be defined nor analysed. Had old windmills like some old homes in which men have lived and died ever the reputation of being haunted, these two mills by their appearance would seem to merit such a character.

We soon found ourselves in the clean and pleasant little town of Bicester, where we took up our quarters for the night at the King's Arms, which proved to be an old-fashioned inn with small outward show but with much internal comfort. Some large modern hotels have effectually managed to reverse these qualities. Huge establishments, where amongst numbers you may live in stately

solitude, their very grandeur and size seeming to freeze all the friendliness out of people; establishments where no one seems to have any special interest in yourself or your doings—till the time of departure and tipping arrives. Needless to add, at such hotels no genial landlord nor motherly landlady comes to the door when your sojourn is ended to wish you good-speed and a pleasant journey (a little act of courtesy that is very pleasing), for the excellent reason that the landlord is converted into a manager. As you leave, perchance the hall-porter stares languidly as he pockets your gratuity, and the Boots touches his cap as he turns away ready to repeat the same operation for the next "number" that goes away.

At the King's Arms we drove into one of those ample and picturesque courtyards that were a necessity in the age of posting and coaching, when they were thronged and busy enough. Now they seem almost deserted except on market-days. We always make it a point to enter our inn by the courtyard, when possible, as it is pleasanter to descend from the carriage in quiet than in the street with people looking on and wondering whoever you can be; and country people are astonishingly inquisitive about strangers. The arrival of our dog-cart at the various towns and villages on the way seemed to be quite an event, and we generally found, after we had secured our quarters and had our belongings taken within, on going to the stables to see how the horses were faring, two or three or even more of the inhabitants of the place gathered around the dog-

cart and ostler, manifestly with a desire to satisfy their curiosity as to who we were, and why we had come to their special part of the world.

Oh the quiet and comfort of these old-time hostgeries, where on arriving one feels more like a welcome guest than a mere strange traveller seeking rest and shelter! Well did we fare beneath the sign of the King's Arms, and on leaving we felt—as we often felt under similar circumstances during the journey—that the inevitable bill was but an incident in our stay, and that we had received in the kindness and attention shown to us, together with the obvious anxiety to do everything to make our short stay a pleasant one, a something not included in the bill, a something that is not to be purchased by money. Frequently, indeed, on leaving our inn has the landlady presented us with a little posy of flowers, and on one occasion a basket of fruit was handed to us, "if we would kindly accept of it to refresh us on the way." Such pleasing and thoughtful attentions are very gratifying. I have never experienced anything of the kind when leaving a company-managed hotel.

Why it should have been so I cannot say, but almost every one we met on our journey seemed to take a special interest in our tour, and to vie with each other in showing us any little kindness, assistance, or attention that might be in their power. We saw only the bright side of life and the better part of human nature during our wanderings. The sunny side of the world was presented to us ; and a most delightful world to live in and travel through it appeared.

CHAPTER V

An awkward blunder—An enthusiastic antiquary—A wild drive—
Curious gargoyles—A house with a history—A lonely hostel—
A contented farmer—Westcot Barton—Gagingwell—An amusing
incident—Chipping Norton—The love of scenery—Farmhouse
inns—A Druid's circle—A romantic home of the past—
The Four Shire Stone.

A CLEAN bright little town is Bicester, one that pleased us much, not, however, for its picturesqueness, for it is neither picturesque nor quaint, though it possesses one or two interesting old buildings, but it was attractive to us for its homelike and natural look.

According to our usual wont, on arriving at a fresh place we set out to take a stroll of inspection around the town whilst the daylight lasted. During the course of our perambulations we came upon its ancient parish church, an interesting structure externally but with little worthy of note internally. Here in the porch we observed a man busy taking measurements and making plans, whereupon we concluded to ourselves (over-hastily as it turned out) that the church, or at any rate the porch, was about to undergo a process of restoration, and that we had at last come upon our especial enemy, the restorer in person. "So you are going to restore

the old church?" we said. Never shall I forget the look the old gentleman gave us. "Restore the church!" he exclaimed in a reproachful tone; then he straightened himself up, and in a dignified voice asked us who we took him for. It was evident that we had blundered, so we meekly remarked that seeing him working at plans we presumed that he was making them for the purpose of restoring the building. At this he became quite wrathful. "Restore the church, indeed!" he replied. "Sir, I'm an archæologist! I'm simply making drawings of the porch for my society. Restore the sacred old pile! I would not have a single stone of it touched if I had my way. Good evening." And thereupon he turned away from us, both angered and disgusted that we should so have mistaken his purpose.

A pretty blunder we had innocently made, and moreover we had plainly hurt the feelings of the zealous old antiquary. Our apologies were as profuse as they were genuine, still it was some time before we could make matters smooth; but at last the kind-hearted enthusiast softened towards us, and eventually we became quite confidentially friendly to each other, and as penance for our stupidity at so hastily jumping at conclusions, we patiently listened to our newly-made friend's long and learned dissertation as to the past history of the ancient structure, although it was prolonged to an almost wearisome extent. The gray old pile was to him a book in stone, as easy to read as any printed page, and it had grown dark before we

could feel our way to bid him good-night, for we had not the heart to risk again hurting the good man's feelings by even an apparent want of interest in his erudite, albeit prolix, lecture, so palpably was the giving of this a love-task. I can only trust that our attentive listening redeemed our character in his estimation.

Leaving Bicester, our way led us through an open thinly-inhabited district,—a district wherein bare stone walls took the place of the familiar hedgerows that are so characteristic of the English country. The light pure air, however, and far-reaching uninterrupted prospects all around over wide fields to the circling blue distance afforded us no small compensation for the loss of the softer beauties of a more treeful and sheltered land; but we did miss the enlivening songs and companionable twittering of birds, for there was a strange silence all around. Still, the mind has many moods, and that wild, wind-swept, bird-forsaken stretch of country suited well our spirits that day.

There was nothing of special interest to note on the first few miles of our morning's stage, till we arrived at the pretty little village of Middleton Stony, which charmed us with its clean, neat, stone-built cottages, mostly covered with creepers. One rural home here had some yew trees in its shady garden clipped into fantastic shapes in the quaintly formal manner that so pleased our ancestors. On leaving this secluded hamlet we drove alongside of an old wall that skirted a well-wooded park for

miles,—a wall that faithfully followed every bend and rise and fall of the road for all that distance. A rare old wall it was, too (not of yesterday), with its stones weathered to a delicious cool gray; moss-encrusted and lichen-stained here and there, overgrown in places with dark-green ivy, and everywhere the home of tiny ferns, hardy grasses, and rock-loving plants. More familiar to me these last by sight than by their botanical names; and, after all, the beauty of flowers or plants does not depend upon their Latin titles.

Soon again we struck upon another long stretch of wild open country, over which the wind swept cool and unrestrained; a pleasant country to drive across on a warm summer day, but hardly so desirable to traverse, one would imagine, in the winter-time. In truth, it was quite cool enough on that sunny September morning, and we found our light wraps and overcoats to be very acceptable. Then once again the character of the landscape changed, and we rapidly descended into a greener and more sheltered country. The stone walls by degrees gave place to bramble-covered banks and treeful hedgerows, the air became perceptibly warmer, and our wraps and coats were re-consigned to the box of the dog-cart.

Now a sudden bend in the road revealed to us the scattered and very sleepy village of Lower Heyford. On the tower of the church here we noticed some curious and effective gargoyles. The rectory was close at hand; and a very charming rectory it was, with its ivy-clad walls and ancient

mullioned windows. We ventured to ask here for the keys of the church, as it looked interesting, but, alas, the interior disappointed us. We could not reason to ourselves exactly why, but somehow we had a presentiment that in this remote spot (apparently too poor and forsaken to indulge in church restoration) we might very probably come upon a quaint monument, knightly brass, curious epitaph, or, perchance, at least some rare bit of ancient carving in stone or oak; but our antiquarian expectations were doomed to disappointment, the building was old enough, truly, but I am no blind worshipper of age alone, otherwise a common flint might interest me more than the Pyramids, as it was ancient when they were young.

We left Heyford church in a disappointed frame of mind, and proceeding on our way soon crossed the little river Cherwell on a long stone bridge. I wonder why these little rivers should so frequently possess such fine bridges? From this spot we caught, to our left, a glimpse of a charmingly picturesque Tudor mansion; a grand old home mellowed and toned by time. From our maps we made this out to be Rousham,—a house with a history. Horace Walpole visited Sir Charles Cotrell here (who was then Master of the Ceremonies of the King's Court), and during his stay in a letter to a friend Walpole remarked: "If I had such a house, and so pretty a wife, I would let the king look somewhere else for his Master of Ceremonies."

Uphill now our changeful road took us, by dark

OUT OF THE BEATEN TRACK



dank woods, with peeps through their thick stems of silent pools of weed-grown waters ; a gloomy bit of way, gloomy even on that bright sunshiny day. Just the locality to suit a sensational novelist as the scene of some blood-curdling tragedy ; the very spot one of the old school of romantic writers would have delighted to describe in detail as the place fixed for a deadly duel to settle an ancient family feud, or for an encounter with the knights of the road, or for some other mysterious or ghastly deed ; a spot to which the terms weird and uncanny might justly be applied, yet doubtless as innocent of romance or tragedy as any smiling countryside.

How abounding in unexpected contrasts is a day's drive through an unfamiliar country, and how interesting are the scenic surprises that you continually come upon just when you least expect them. Emerging from these gloomy woods we found ourselves in an uneventful farming country, and then we came to an unpretending little hostel at the corner of four cross-roads.

Hopcrofts Holt was the name of the lonely hostel, but why so called the landlord thereof could not say. Mine host, besides being an innkeeper, farmed, so he informed us, three hundred acres, so that he combined two callings ; and let us hope that he found the combination profitable, for he was a worthy man who looked on the bright side of life and was not given to grumbling. Even in his capacity of farmer he did not complain of bad times. In truth it was a novel sensation, and as delightful as it was novel, to come upon a con-

tented agriculturist. But one does come upon such a *rara avis* now and again, at very infrequent intervals ; and when found, such a unique character deserves a note. Furthermore, our landlord astonished us by saying that he kept fifteen horses, and did a fair amount of posting besides "mailing," by which we gathered from the context he meant the horsing and conveying of the rural mails. Where, however, the people came from who posted, or where they went to, we could not imagine, for a more unlikely spot in all Great Britain in which to find a "real live" posting-house it seemed to us difficult to conceive ; but the traveller by road discovers so many strange things as he journeys on—provided he keeps his eyes open—that at last he ceases to wonder or be surprised at anything. Here was a solitary inn situated in the heart of country that as far as we could judge did not seem to be overburdened with inhabitants, and yet here of all places we found that posting was more or less a profitable business, to say nothing of "mailing." Manifestly it would appear that even in these later days the iron horse has not all its own way.

Bidding good-bye to our host at Hopcrofts Holt, we drove along till we came to the rural little village of Westcot Barton, just outside which a number of allotment gardens, with their tiny thatched ricks of hay and corn, and miniature fields of various crops and potato patches, suggested to us a rich farming district in the land of Liliput. Here we stopped a while to take a

photograph of the humble village inn, which made quite a pretty picture with its bronzed thatched roof, its outside staircase, and two spreading elms in front, between which was placed a sheltered seat for the benefit of its rustic patrons. A notice on the building of "A horse and trap on hire" proclaimed that this was also a posting-house in a small way.

Whilst photographing the inn a man came up to us and asked, "How much do them likenesses cost, for oi should like my house took?" We at once entered into the spirit of the thing. "Well," we replied, "that depends upon how large you want it done." He said, "As large as you can take un." Whereupon we demanded a whole shilling, but our would-be customer was inclined to bargain: a shilling he thought was too much, but he would give a sixpence,—"But mind yer oi won't pay till oi get ther picture; oi doant trust yer phograffer fellows, oi doant." This was not very flattering to ourselves, and we felt a sudden degree of sympathy with the poor peregrinating photographer. What now I wonder does our rustic patron think after having received a photograph of his cottage—the rural patron being very much in evidence at his doorway—neatly if inexpensively framed by "those phograffer fellows," and all for nothing, or perchance can he imagine that we forgot to enclose our little bill for sixpence? When next we travel that way we shall expect to do quite a roaring trade!

On another occasion and place we were much

amused by unexpectedly meeting with a miller's man, the mill in which he worked having been photographed for him by us on the previous year, after a long bargaining for the sum of one whole shilling (on trust). In due course the picture was forwarded without charge. We were much amused, as I have said, on our chance meeting with the same man again, on being asked how it was we had made no charge. As the matter had almost escaped our memory, we were puzzled for the moment what reply to make. However, we tried to explain to him, that it was solely owing to the large number of photographs we took which enabled us to do them for nothing. I shall not in a hurry forget the blank look of astonishment that the miller gave us; the reasoning appeared too deep for the simple rustic mind. And a delightful simple-minded man he was, a treasure of stupidity; but possibly he ground corn well, and after all that was his business and more than we could do. Yet perchance the miller was not so supremely stupid as we imagined, for after turning the whole affair slowly over in his mind, he suddenly exclaimed, "Maister, oi a mind to have some more pictures took of mysel' and t'old missus if——" But this was quite unexpected and rather embarrassing, so we deemed it best to hurry away upon some excuse. Fortunately we have not again met that simple Sussex miller.

Westcot Barton is doubtless a healthy spot, for we observed on one house the notice "Dr. — attends here on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fri-

days." We could only trust that the inhabitants of the place have the good sense not to be taken ill on the wrong days. There are some disadvantages in living in remote country villages. Not an inconsiderable one is the uncertainty of when you may get the doctor. Even should there be a resident Esculapius near at hand, the chances are not in favour of his being over-clever, or he would hardly be there. Moreover, as he has long distances to traverse to see his various patients, you can never be sure when he may return home once started on his rounds, and in the winter, if he chance to be a bit of a sportsman, as some doctors (and even parsons) are, he may be away with the hounds the best part of the day. The parson may hunt and not be missed, he is not wanted till next Sunday, but the doctor may be needed at any time.

Close by the side of the roadway stands the ancient diminutive church of Westcot Barton. This possesses a good east window and a very beautiful carved and coloured screen. Amongst the grass-grown graves of its quiet God's acre are some moss-encrusted steps that we imagined formerly upheld a high stone cross.

Another couple of miles or so brought us to the romantic but desolate-looking hamlet of Gagingwell. The name of the place we gleaned from our map, for we did not see a soul anywhere about of whom to ask. The name Gagingwell struck us as rather curious, and also that there possibly might be some meaning attached to it; but whether

this be so I am not sufficiently a learned antiquary to say, and as I am not writing a guide-book but the simple record of a pleasure outing, I feel in no way bound to hunt in musty old volumes on the chance of making any discovery as to the origin of the name. The place certainly interested us, it had such a strangely forsaken look. The hamlet consists merely of a few stone-built cottages and an ancient farmstead, all situated in a sheltered hollow. A little brook runs by these, which is crossed by some rural stepping-stones. A ford we had passed through on our second day out, but these were the first stepping-stones we had come upon this journey; and very delighted we were to see them, they so belong to the *real* country, and are so essentially picturesque. The farmstead and few cottages that compose Gaging-well are gathered round a rough bit of green, too rough even for village-cricket. There was not even the inevitable donkey browsing on it, nor the usual flock of cackling geese. Nothing living could we discover anywhere around: no smoke was rising from any chimney; it was in truth a desolate-looking spot, singularly forlorn and quiet even for a country hamlet. At one end of the green were some broken steps which still held a portion of a stone shaft, possibly of old a market-cross. Gaging-well has doubtless its little unwritten history; it looks, as antiquaries say, "likely."

Leaving this lonely hamlet, a short drive brought us to the small scattered town of Enstone, a slumberous place I dare say, but as we actually saw

one or two people about, it appeared almost gay after the depressing desolation of Gagingwell. Enstone consists of a straggling collection of houses built without any apparent consideration for order, which delightful disregard of uniformity makes it all the more pleasing. The place was of some importance in the old coaching days, being at the junction of four main roads leading north and south, east and west. Now its formerly flourishing inns are converted into cottages or other uses, and whatever prosperity it had, due to the traffic by road, seems to have departed with the coaches, and being far from railways, a slumberous tranquillity has fallen over it.

We noticed that the fine old church here was undergoing a thorough process of restoration. Pulling up, we walked to the ancient edifice to see whether we could find anything of interest before the destroyer's hand was laid upon it, and the hoary antiquity of centuries replaced by spick and span new work, for even the most conservative and necessary repairs may obliterate some of the bloom and rare charm that is alone the dower of time, and all restorers are not conservative in their work, nor so generally careful as they might be to confine themselves to absolutely necessary operations. Within the building men were busy scraping and chiselling. On entering, I of course took off my hat; the workmen were not so particular, they kept theirs on. The interior, as far as we could see it, was uninteresting; and we concluded that it must have undergone a previous restoration. We noticed

an altar-tomb having the representation of a man kneeling. This bore the date 1633, and an inscription below showed that it was intended to preserve to future generations the memory of one Stevens Wisdom. Some one had written on the back of this: "Visited by his descendants 21st Sept. 1880."

The day was warm, and on leaving the church I rested for a while in the grateful shade of the building, and, for the sake of coolness, still kept my hat off. Whilst standing quietly there I overheard one of the workmen ask of another—for they could see me, though possibly they were unaware that I could hear them—"Why do 'e keep 'is 'at off like that out-of-doors, mate?" The men, I noticed, left their "h's" out, but on the credit side I must own that they did not introduce unnecessary ones. The "mate" replied, "'Cause he's a Quaker, o' course: Quakers allus do in churchyards." Here was an opportunity not to be lost. "No," I exclaimed aloud, "I'm not a Quaker, I'm an Episcopalian." There was a short awkward pause; then the first workman, who was evidently of an inquiring turn of mind, further asked of his fellow-mason, who appeared to be considered an authority, "A E-pis-cos-pale one, 'e says 'e is; wot's that, Bill?" "Oh," replied the learned Bill, not to be done, "that's one o' them fancy foreign religions, sure!" After this we quietly took our departure, not a little amused by the incident.

A stiff though short rise out of Enstone brought us upon high ground, and after a few miles of breezy barren country, Chipping Norton, our in-

tended destination for the night, came in sight, its houses and church tower telling (to use a familiar artist's expression) darkly gray against the golden evening sky. The prospect was quite Turneresque. Though we could see the town thus plainly some miles ahead, still on reaching a signpost-less corner where two roads diverged, we felt by no means certain which one to take, and as there chanced to be a shepherd in a field close by, we thought it wise to ask of him the way. "Take the left road," he shouted, "till yer come to two housen, then keep to yer left again . . ." and so on. I have merely given this scrap of conversation because it contained the old Saxon plural of "en" in "housen" for houses. This curious expression at once struck us, though in remote country districts it is still to be heard occasionally, so long and firmly do ancient forms of language linger on. But the next generation will know better. The schoolboard is busy at work in the country; let us hope that the new teaching will not spoil the old labourer, that he will be able to build and thatch a rick as well, and to plough a furrow as straight, as his less learned forefathers.

At Chipping Norton we put up at the White Hart, a fine substantial old coaching hostelry, built of stone like the rest of the town. At one side of the entrance to this we noticed the now familiar legend: "Cyclist Touring Club Headquarters"; and on the opposite side another that was quite new to us, namely, "Pedestrian Touring Club Headquarters."

Chipping Norton is of the order of long one-streeted towns, the roadway widening out in the centre of the town to a spacious market-place. It is bleakly situated on the crest of a hill, and the buildings are uninteresting, but when you can get them, there are fine views to be had from between the houses, over miles of wooded country, that are worth looking at. Our bedroom window commanded a glorious panorama, and we sat and watched it till the light faded from the landscape and the sky. We could not help wondering whether our coach-travelling, port-wine-loving fore-fathers ever troubled themselves about the beauty of the view from this same window; probably not, for the love of scenery for its own sake is of very modern growth. The writers of the period saw nothing in the country but a succession of green fields, and they applied the term "hateful" to mountains. In the evening we studied our map and road-books, and planned our route for the next day,—always a pleasant and interesting occupation.

The weather continued to smile upon us. We awoke in the morning to a warm sunny day; but if the sun was warm, a refreshing breeze was blowing. It was a day of days for driving, so after an early breakfast we set out once more on our wanderings.

Our road at first proved to be rather hilly, though not much to complain of, and if the road was hilly the scenery was very pretty. About three miles brought us to high ground, from which we had a grand prospect over a far-stretching and well-timbered landscape to a hazy distance of faint

blue hills; then, when on about the highest spot, we passed a lonely wayside inn and farmstead combined, called the Cross Hands. Indeed, many of the old coaching hostelries in the country are converted now into comfortable farmhouses, and very excellent ones they make, though of course always close to the roadside, which in some respects is not an advantage. As we discovered more than once by a plentiful supply of cream, milk, new-laid eggs, and the like, there are worse places to rest a while at than one of these remote half-farmhouses, half-inns, a by no means unhappy combination.

In a short time now we began a long descent, from the top of which we had another panorama of scenic loveliness. In this glorious stretch of green country fading away in the far, far distance into a dim dreamy uncertainty there was everything to delight the eye and nothing to offend it.

At the end of the descent the secluded village of Little Compton came into sight. Near to this is a so-called Druid's circle, known as the Rollrich Stones. The circle in itself is somewhat disappointing, but there is a grand and extensive view from the spot that well rewards a scramble thereto. The stones that compose the circle of about forty yards in diameter are very low; their impressiveness lies in their situation. Some eighty yards or so north of the circle stands a monolith of strange shape.

There is an old tradition connected with these stones that is still preserved (if not believed) in the

neighbourhood. According to this: Once upon a time—what a delightfully vague date—there was a certain king (whose name, as well as that of the country over which he ruled, not recorded). This king, it appears, was told by an oracle that—

When Long Compton thou shalt see,
King of England shalt thou be.

Fortified by this assurance, the ambitious king gathered his knights and army together and set out in the direction of Long Compton.

When nearing the village, but still out of sight of it, he called his knights around him to hold a consultation as to which direction they should take, when suddenly a witch appeared on the scene. The king thereupon stepped up to her and demanded the way to Long Compton. But her only reply to the query was—

King of England, thou shalt be none,
Move no more, stand fast stone.

And while she spoke the king and his knights were turned into stones, and in this petrified state they remain to this day, and any disbelieving traveller may see them for himself as a proof of the truth of the tradition. The large stone standing apart from the rest being still known round about as the "King's Stane," or King's Stone.

Whatever may have been the origin of this mysterious circle of stones, whether raised by the Druids of old or not, it seems certain that it may be classed with Stonehenge and similar rude prehistoric structures; the purport of their erection we can scarcely even hope to have revealed to us.

Who shall withdraw the secrets of the past?
Beneath whose shade eternal secrets lie;
Ask of the midnight storm and wandering blast—
Their only answer is a long-drawn sigh.

Near to Long Compton stands Chastleton, an exceedingly interesting old Jacobean house. The estate of Chastleton once belonged to the notorious conspirator Catesby, who sold it wherewith to provide means to carry out the Gunpowder Plot. A gentleman I know, an enthusiastic admirer of old English homes, thus graphically describes a visit he made to the spot: "Leaving Long Compton, after walking a while along a pretty and thoroughly English lane, we presently espy amongst the trees the gray old time-worn mansion of Chastleton. Here is our very beau-ideal of an old ancestral hall, and we stop spell-bound to admire its beauty. The grand old gabled house, with its lofty square towers, and rusty roof of lichen growth, and the old entrance gateway and dovecote in front, form a picture which cannot easily be forgotten; it is almost impossible for any verbal description to do it justice. Before we enter we must have a look at the old-fashioned garden with its sun-dial and fantastically-shaped box trees." The interior of this old hall, with its raised daïs, carved screen, panelling, and wide open fireplace, its tapestried rooms, and haunted-looking bed-chambers, its priest's hole, or hiding-place, is in keeping with its romantic exterior.

Another two miles of pleasant country brought us to the Four Shire Stone, a square pillar erected by the roadside at a point where the shires of

Oxford, Worcester, Gloucester, and Warwick meet. There is nothing remarkable about the spot, except the solitary pillar ; we walked round this, so that in rather less than a minute we accomplished the feat of having been in four different counties. My road-book (Paterson) has a note respecting this erection which states : "It is rendered interesting from the circumstance of its standing on the spot where a severe battle was fought between the English and Danes, in which the latter, under Canute, were totally defeated by Edmund Ironside."

Proceeding on our way, we soon reached the clean and neat little town of Moreton-in-the-Marsh. Here we sought shelter and "refreshment for man and beast" at the ancient White Hart hostelry, which still retains the legend on its sign of " Posting House." It was at the White Hart here that Charles I. slept on the night of Tuesday 2nd July 1644, when on his way to Evesham. Whether the inn is the same now as then or has been altered I cannot say, but it looks old enough to satisfy all requirements as to age. It may even be that we lunched in the very chamber in which the unfortunate king supped over two centuries ago, and I can only trust that he fared as well as we did. Curiously enough, that same evening at Broadway we slept at the very inn where Cromwell slept just before the battle of Worcester. Indeed, there is hardly an ancient manor house, or an old inn of any importance in the district, but boasts of having sheltered awhile either the king or his arch-enemy ;

the countryside abounds in traditions of such occupations more or less authentic.

Moreton-in-the-Marsh, to give it its full title (although the inhabitants have for the sake of brevity reduced it to Moreton), is a sunny little town of one wide street. This has trees planted on it on either side, which give the place a cared-for appearance. Moreton possesses some curious old buildings, and a quaint, though modern, town-hall, with a lantern tower on the top of its high-pitched roof, and a shadowy arched open space below; the structure somewhat remotely, however, reminds one of medieval work. There is no denying that this picturesque bit of nineteenth-century building gives quite a character and an interest to the old street in which it stands; it will be even more picturesque when Time has stained its walls, and lichens have splashed its roof with colour, and what is now mere space is full of variety. But, pleasing as this structure is, we could not but feel that its picturesqueness was too evidently intended, strained after perhaps better expresses my meaning. Still on the whole it is a satisfactory piece of work, and when the intention is good one must not be over-exacting or look on the result with too critical an eye; and fault-finding is so easy. It is much to have the desire for beauty so openly acknowledged; to have awakened to the discovery that there should be something more in a building than four square walls with holes therein for windows, and a roof on the top to keep the rain out.

CHAPTER VI

A stiff climb—Bourton-on-the-Hill—An elevated road—Stray sheep—
A grand view—Broadway Hill—A unique and romantic village
—A fine old coaching hostelry—We are shown over an ancient
home—Relics of the coaching age—A ruined grange—The
stones of England—Broadway church—A weather-worn effigy—
A curious building—An old water-mill—Stone carvings—Old-
time interiors—A chat with mine host.

LEAVING Moreton-in-the-Marsh, we drove through a pretty and wooded country, very restful to the eye but possessing no special descriptive features. Our road at first was level and good going, and we trotted merrily along, but soon had to moderate the pace to a walk as we encountered a long and stiff climb of a mile or more to Bourton-on-the-Hill. By the way, the names of the towns and villages about here struck us as long-spun-out, for besides this Bourton-on-the-Hill and Moreton-in-the-Marsh, we noticed on our map round about within a limited circle many others of a similar extended kind, as Stow-on-the-Wold, Shipston-on-Stour, Stretton-on-the-Foss, Ashton-under-Hill, Hinton-on-the-Green, etc.; and when neither "on," "under," nor "in" somewhere, the places generally indulged in the prefixes of "great," "little," or "long."

Bourton-on-the-Hill is a stony-looking hard-

featured village, that reminded us of some of the more remote Yorkshire or Derbyshire hamlets. If unadorned, however, the houses that compose it are substantial. I would the London house I live in were half as well built ; if so, I could dispense with a good deal of the outside show with which it has pleased the speculative builder to adorn it—in his opinion.

Our road now took us high up in the world, and passing an old inn with mullioned windows, that would surely have tempted us to stop had we not come so short a distance, we found ourselves in a bleak and barren upland country. Driving along our elevated lonely road, a feeling of remoteness and a sense of silence and solitude came over us. We seemed for a time to be lifted above the everyday world with all its strivings, longings, and trivialities. All around were vast breadths of undulating lands ; the sounds that came to us were so softened and modified by distance that they only served to emphasise the general stillness. It was glorious driving along those breezy uplands, it was a delight simply to inhale the light bracing air ; the horses too seemed to enjoy it as much as we did, for they sniffed at it and pranced about in quite a lively manner. A change of air does horses as much good as it does their owners ; and what is more, I believe that they appreciate it although they may have no eye for scenery.

As we drove steadily along, suddenly over a low stone wall a short distance in front of us a flock of sheep jumped one after the other in a manner that I thought only mountain sheep could

jump. When, however, on the road, the sheep appeared at a loss what to do with their freedom. Why had they left their green pastures for the dusty highway? A short time afterwards we heard a great shouting, and looking round we saw the shepherd calling to his dog to fetch the truant sheep back. It was exceedingly interesting to observe how thoroughly the knowing old collie understood his master's instructions. "Hi, good dog, head 'em! Turn 'em! Gently now! Bring 'em back! Steady will yer—" Then followed some expressive language not suitable to polite reading, because the dog was too eager and ran the frightened sheep too hard. Eventually, however, the clever collie managed to bring the stray flock safely back again as directed, though perhaps a little blown. We could not but admire his intelligence—or sagacity is it?

Soon now we reached the top of Broadway Hill. Here a wonderfully extensive panorama over the rich and fruitful vale of Evesham was spread out before us; it was as though the world in front had suddenly dropped down, and we gazed upon a miniature kingdom, with its cities, towns, and villages, its mountains, hills, and rivers. It would have been worth the whole drive if only to have had that one revelation of scenery. The superb view from this spot, one of the finest in England, was far famed in the days of road-travel, even the coaches used to stop here a short time that the passengers might enjoy the prospect; but now, when everybody is conveyed by railway, few possibly

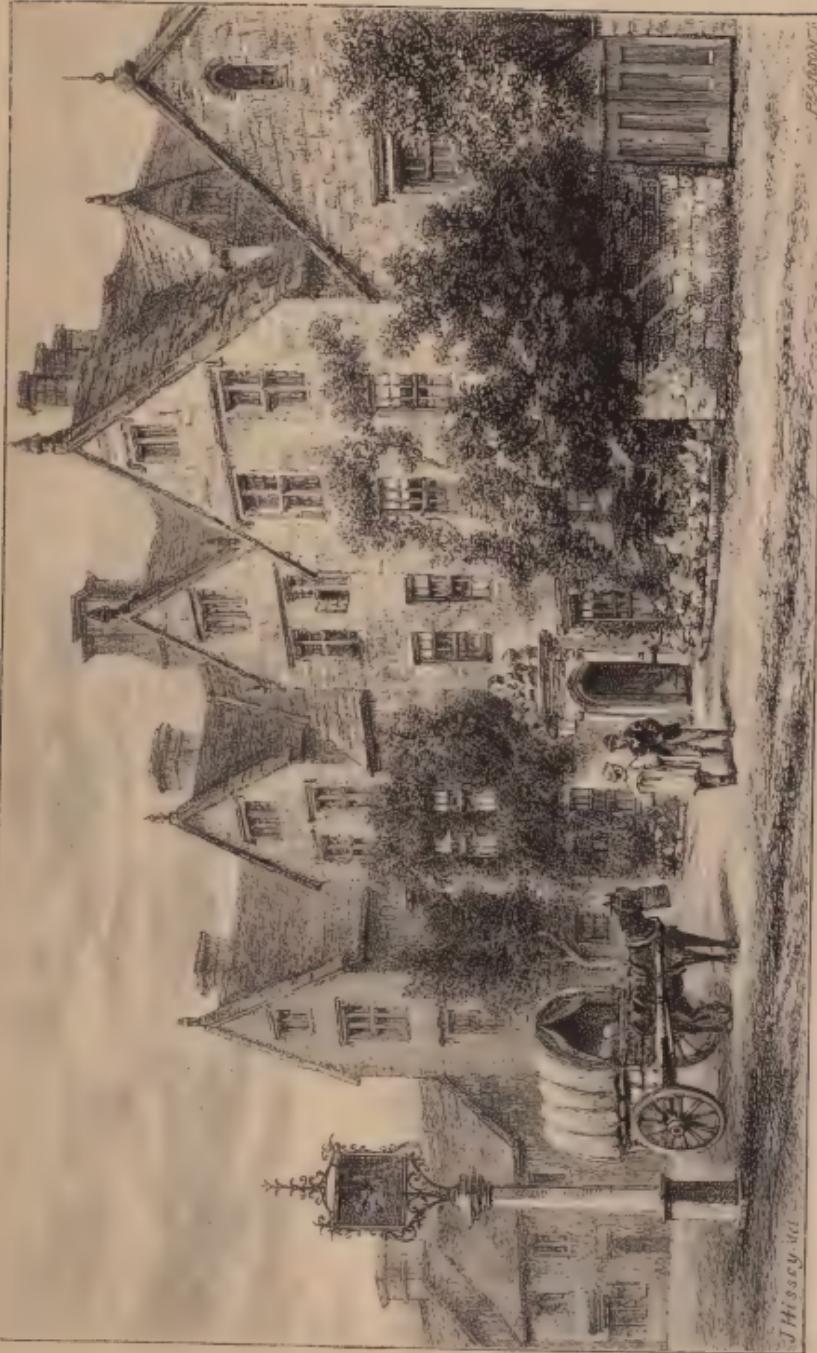
know of its existence. Who ever heard of a railway train stopping on account of a view?

This wonderful Broadway Hill rises right out of the plain, and from its summit, the landlord of our inn informed us, thirteen counties may be seen on a clear day. We had a clear day, and as our eyesight is good, we may have seen all these thirteen shires, or portions of them ; but as one county looks much like another, and as they have no visible dividing lines, I cannot say for certain whether we did or no. I am content to take the matter for granted. I hate to dispute about trifles ; and one county more or less what does it matter ?

But in all seriousness, the view from Broadway Hill is a most glorious one, so space-expressing and full of distant mystery. Our visions, so sadly limited for the greater part of each year to the confined prospects of London streets, rejoiced to range unrestrained over such a vast expanse. There, far, far away in the faint blue horizon may dimly be discerned a pyramidal mountain, that is the Sugarloaf, near Abergavenny ; then to the right of this we have the long undulating range of the Black Mountains, to the north are the Clent Hills, and farther away may be seen the lonely Wrekin. Nearer at hand are the Malvern Beacons, and the low hill of Bredon, and many others—if you can distinguish them : as faithful chroniclers we have only enumerated those we saw, or believed we saw. Now a long, winding, and steep descent took us into the quaint and charming village of Broadway. Here we pulled up at the Lygon Arms,

one of the finest and most interesting of old coaching inns imaginable, and but little altered or spoilt, though it bears the date of 1620 on its carved stone doorway, and must therefore have existed for over two centuries. An ideal old hostel, a romance in stone, more like what one would expect to find in a painting, or described in a novel, than to meet with actually existing by the roadside in these present prosaic times.

The village of Broadway is unique; it consists of a wide thoroughfare with a bit of triangular green at one end. This thoroughfare is bounded on either side by the most charmingly quaint old stone-built houses conceivable, many dating from the sixteenth century, when men knew how to build both well and picturesquely. These dear old houses rejoice in mullioned windows with leaden lattice panes, great gabled roofs with ornamental finials, moulded doorways and cosy porches, Tudor chimneys (as carefully designed and proportioned as the more important parts), and all sorts of odd and effective architectural bits. In fine, Broadway is a picture, a village such as an artist would have designed, and placed just where an artist would have placed it, set as it is in the midst of a most lovely green and treeful country, and backed by the wooded Cotswolds,—at least they are wooded just above Broadway. Even the cottages here are grandly built, better indeed than many a modern mansion, and the humblest one has a dignified look. Some of the houses are level with the roadway, but many stand back from it, snugly ensconced in



AN OLD COACHING INN, LYGON ARMS, BROADWAY

P. & J. BROWN

J. Hissey, inc.

little gardens bounded by low stone walls, over which you may see carelessly arranged beds of old-fashioned flowers, sweet-scented and rich in colour, flourishing as they only seem to flourish in such old-fashioned gardens. Driving into this delightful old-world village, it was as though we had driven back two centuries or more, even into a bit of England of Shakespeare's day. There are few if any spots remaining now that so thoroughly bring before one the picturesque aspect of times departed.

Our inn, as I have said, was a romance in stone, an ideal hostelry, and the landlord too was an ideal one, in true sympathy with his romantic surroundings. Seeing the great interest we took in his delightful old-time inn, he kindly showed us all over it; and fortunate indeed is the chance that has given to such a rare old building a proprietor who so highly prizes its possession. The interior of the Lygon Arms is very interesting to antiquaries and lovers of the picturesque; it abounds in suggestive bits of architectural detail, with its ancient panelling, half-timber stairway (formerly hidden by plaster which the estimable landlord promptly removed on coming into possession), its oaken doors, mouldings, carved spandrels, and quaint ironwork, such as curiously shaped hinges, bell-pulls, locks, casement-fastenings, and the like. Mine host also showed me an old oak-panelled room, his especial "den," a most charming room with a little staircase all to itself and that opened into it through a corner of the panelling, though there was another way of reaching it. This reminds me that after ascending to our

bedroom we went down some steps into it in the most quaint fashion. We were also shown a very fine sitting-room with an enriched plaster ceiling and a decorative frieze running round the walls. The room also possessed a grand carved mantelpiece. This and the bedroom adjoining are said to have been occupied by Cromwell when staying here shortly before the battle of Worcester. At the time of our visit these apartments were engaged by a famous architect, doubtless making studies and taking notes in the village and around. Architects in search of motives and fresh ideas might well come to Broadway ; the buildings here are thoroughly English, abound in suggestive detail, and, if I may use such an expression, are racy of the soil from which they spring.

A solitary riverside hostel at Upware, in the Fens, has painted in large letters on its front, "Five miles from anywhere ; no hurry." This might be as suitably inscribed on the sign of the Lygon Arms ; for Broadway is miles from the nearest town, and its old-fashioned calm has never been disturbed by the railway whistle. Long may it retain its ancient peacefulness.

The peculiar individuality and quiet beauty of Broadway charmed us, so that we felt we must stay there over the next day and explore the place, giving our horses at the same time a well-merited rest. One might travel all fair England over and not come upon another spot so typical of the picturesque past, so unspoilt, so removed from the present day. Broadway is an artist's paradise, a treasure-store

of delightful bits for the brush or pencil, and the camera.

To return to our inn. This, we learnt from our landlord, was originally called the White Hart, but having been some years ago purchased by the Lygon family, the name it had borne so long was thereupon changed for that of the Lygon Arms. My *Paterson's Roads*, last edition of 1829, gives the inn here as the White Hart. The old inn now belongs to its present occupier, and we tried our best to persuade him to rechristen it with the ancient title so familiar to all travellers by road, and second only in popularity to the Red Lion. It appears that as far back as 1549 the White Harte here was in the possession of one John Treavis. In view of the date 1620 over the doorway, we concluded that this must have been an earlier building possibly pulled down to make room for the present structure. The landlord, however, appeared to think otherwise, and considered that the date 1620 related only to the doorway as being added at that time.

The next morning we were early out with our sketch-books and camera. We had noticed on entering the village the previous day a fine Elizabethan house in the main street, with three great gables in front. To this we first wended our way. Over one of the bay mullioned windows of the ancient home we observed cut in the stone the dates 1659-1660 A.D., presumably the year in which the house was begun and finished respectively. Whilst busy getting our camera in position to

photograph this architectural gem, the owner came out to us, and after a short chat of introduction, asked if we would like to have a look inside the old place. Would we not? It was exactly of all things what we then most desired. This was one of the many instances during our journey that our camera and easel served as an excuse to break the ice with strangers; and when once John Bull gets over his little failing of reserve, he is a very good-hearted fellow. The owner proved to be a genuine English gentleman of the olden school, genial, sociable, jovial, and, like ourselves, a lover of the road. He told us that he had seen us come in the day before, and at once guessed we were on a driving jaunt. He himself had driven over 16,000 miles of English roads—not a bad record; and so having found a common interest we were soon excellent friends. The old house, he told us, was in former times an inn, known as the Angel and Crown, and was a rival to the White Hart,—I beg pardon, the Lygon Arms. He had noticed the quaint old building on one of his driving excursions, fancied it, was pleased with the place and surroundings, and as the house happened to be for sale, purchased it and made it his home. Wise man!

At the old White Hart, as I have already remarked, Cromwell had slept one night. Here at the Angel and Crown Charles I. had also slept a night (or perhaps, rather, had laid his weary head down in an attempt to do so) on his retreat from Evesham. We were shown the room that the unfortunate king occupied; but little altered, we should

imagine, and still retaining the original oak doors. Our host's love of the road and all that pertains thereto was shown by the pictures he had collected representing incidents of the coaching days. Such an enthusiast, indeed, was he, that he had even preserved and treasured all his old toll-gate tickets! Then he pointed out to us what he manifestly considered the gems of his collection—the painted panels from two mail coaches, *temp.* George I., and the hind panel of the Truro and Penzance stage coach.

The old historic home (historic though in a small way), with its ancient hall and open fireplace with oak logs thereon, its beamed ceilings, its deeply recessed windows, some still retaining their original glazing, centuries old, interested us much, and we were sorry to bid our kind host good-bye.

Rambling about photographing an old gable here, a quaint sun-dial there, sketching bits of curious stone carving, ancient doorways, and other odd things around that took our fancy, we at last found ourselves at one end of the village-green, before a picturesque half-ruined old grange that once belonged to the Abbey of Pershore. A charming old fifteenth-century structure this, more pleasing to look upon than many a painted picture; a poem in architecture, with its traceried windows, lichen-laden roof, carved stonework, decorated beams, and unique chimney curiously springing from bold corbels at one side. We have the *Stones of Venice*, who will write for us the Stones of England? Ruskin, in *Fors Clavigera*, remarks

reproachfully that it is a sign of our own ruin that we do not care for dying Venice. How this may be I cannot say; but the little interest we take concerning our own history in stone strikes me as much more worthy of blame. But it was ever so: "A prophet has no honour in his own country." We care more for the distant well-fed heathen than the pinched and patient poor, pallid and worn, at our own doors, and the infinitely greater heathens of Whitechapel and the wretched slums of London —slums that are a disgrace to any civilisation, and a blot upon our boasted Christianity.

Close by the grange was a wonderful old wall, between the worn stones of which two currant-trees grew and flourished, besides a wealth of wall-flowers. One does not come upon such a wall every day. It was a study.

Not far from the grange stands a substantial stone-built barn. This has been converted into a grand studio; for certain fortunate artists have discovered Broadway, and besides converting a barn into a studio, have, I believe, converted an old farmhouse into a delightful country abode. Only the other day I came upon the engraving of a drawing in which the picturesque old Lygon Arms was the chief feature, though the name of the place was not given,—perhaps wisely not, for having found a good thing it does not always do to make it public and thus perchance have it spoilt.

And this reminds me that I may be doing so myself. But the charms of Broadway are of the quiet unassuming kind, not such as attract the

cheap tripper or noisy excursionist; and besides there is no railway within miles, and the tripper likes to be within hail of a station.

Then we set out for a stroll down a tree-shaded hedgerowed country road, that would be considered beautiful even in fair Devonshire, that land of leafy lanes and lovely landscapes. Our wanderings brought us in about a mile to a gray old twelfth-century church situated in a romantic wooded valley. This we discovered to be the old parish church of Broadway, disused now for service, being converted into a mortuary chapel, a new would-be Gothic church having been erected for modern worshippers close to the village, as though the money expended in building this eyesore had not much better been expended in maintaining the ancient time-honoured fane whose walls are sanctified by the oft-repeated praise and prayers of long departed generations of worshippers, and whose very stones are sermons more eloquent than any spoken ones. A gray old church like this seems verily to enclose an atmosphere of the past, to soothe one with a deep sense of rest and peace, to have special associations that appeal to our feelings in a manner no modern building, however desirable or beautiful, possibly can,—not that the new church of Broadway is either desirable or beautiful: it is simply a commonplace meaningless mass of masonry.

Fortunately we found the old church open, so were enabled to inspect the interior. This proved of much interest, and in such excellent repair that a very little expenditure would make it fit for worship.

The more strange therefore that a new one was ever built, for even ugly buildings cost money. On one of the pillars we observed some printed particulars as to the building, extracted, we imagined, from some archæological journal. From this we learnt that the church was "dedicated to St. Edburga, daughter of Edward, eldest son of King Alfred ; that it formerly belonged to Pershore Abbey ; and that its date may be placed between 1160 and 1190. Of the brasses here, the one to Anthony Daston, dated 1572, is palimpsest, having a coat of arms and other work on the back." We noticed that some of the coloured enamelling of the coat of arms on the Daston side of the brass still remains. As a rule very little enamel on brass is preserved to us, as it does not adhere well to the metal and is readily chipped. Much very beautiful and interesting work is thus lost to us. Below the brass to A. Daston is another to a knight, the details of the armour being very clear. These details are of value from an historical point of view as solving difficulties regarding the method of wearing armour. Unfortunately, however, these only show how the armour was worn in front, for the back is never represented.

Some idea of the age of the building may be gathered from the capitals and bases of the pillars. These are Anglo-Norman. In the vestry we noticed an ancient and elaborately carved oak pulpit. This was on the floor, as though it were so much rubbish placed out of the way and sight. The steps that led of old to the rood-loft still remain, though the doorways in connection with them, above and below,

are built up. Also we noticed fragments of rare old stained glass in the traceried windows. In the centre of the chancel floor is a plain brass inscribed—

Here lyeth buried ye body
of Iohn Treavis who
deceased ye 27 of May
Ano D^m 1641—aged 74.

This “Iohn Treavis” we presumed to be the former owner of the White Hart. Well, were he to come to life again, he would not find his old inn much altered: a little more weathered and time-dimmed, and the sign changed; but little else. The former doubtless an improvement, the latter a matter of taste.

But to come back to Broadway church. We were told by the clerk as we were leaving—this party, by the way, found us out in the church; for once, wonderful to relate, we did not have to hunt him up,—the clerk, as I have said, told us that when he knew the church some years ago all the brasses and tombstones on the floor were boarded over. But even this Goth-like act was outdone in another case that came under our notice on a previous tour, for we had it on good authority that a certain church which possessed a quantity of interesting old brasses was restored a few years back, the brasses being covered over with cement, upon which a “beautiful” new pavement of modern Minton tiles was laid! What next, Mr. Restorer? Perhaps you would like to take out the stained glass and stone tracery from our church windows, and put in plate glass. I just throw out the hint.

In the churchyard are some moss-encrusted tombstones with deeply-cut lettering, the inscriptions on which are curious. One struck us, being unique: to a man "who was a good tender husband, in hope of reaching heaven"! Could his wife have ordered this to be inscribed on his tomb we wondered, and is there some hidden meaning in the words?

The peculiar shape of one of the coping-stones on the churchyard wall attracted our attention. On more closely examining this, it appeared to us to have originally formed part of an effigy. Though much weather-worn, we could with some difficulty make out what we judged to be the figure of an abbot or some ecclesiastical dignitary with hands together as though in prayer. It would be interesting, were it possible, to trace the history of this stone. I could moralise here on the mutability of all things human, but refrain.

Retracing our footsteps homeward, or *innward*, to be precise, we passed to the left of the road a curious ivy-grown building possessing a quaint doorway, large enough almost for a palace, and out of all proportion to the edifice. This was surmounted by a great round stone arch, the door itself being of oak and studded with big nails. We asked of a countryman if he knew anything about it, but we could glean nothing more than "it is called the Court House." Possibly this had something to do with the Abbey of Pershore. From its name we judged that the abbot may have held a court here.

Then we came across an old water-mill, of which we made a sketch,—windmills and water-mills are

always so sketchable! Here we noticed built into the walls some finely carved stones, consisting of coats of arms, with helmets and crests minutely detailed, and other heraldic devices, amongst which was a well-executed lion. Mixed up with these were some moulded lintels that had evidently belonged to an important house. Doubtless these with the rest were the spoils of some neighbouring mansion that had been pulled down. They were especially notable because of the beauty and artistic nature of the work, and the sharpness thereof, though probably centuries old.

Once more in romantic Broadway, we caught a passing glimpse in the gathering twilight of the interiors of one or two cottage-homes; and very homelike and picturesque they looked, with their smoke-browned beamed ceilings and old-fashioned spacious corner-cupboards, that well might make a modern London housewife envious. One interior especially delighted us. Here we saw a great though cosy ingle-nook, almost a little room in itself; the red fire-light from this caused sundry copper and pewter pans to glow out of the dim recesses of the chamber, and over the cheerful blazing wood hung a caldron in chains from an iron bracket high up the chimney. It was a ready-made picture. In such a cottage, it seems to me, a poor nobleman might live and not feel ashamed. Far rather would I inhabit such a one than many an "eligible" suburban villa with all its pretentious external show and small internal comfort and convenience.

Once more we found ourselves beneath the sign

of the Lygon Arms, pleasantly tired after our day's wanderings, with many charming additions to our sketch-book, and we trusted not a few interesting photographs, but these were an unknown quantity, for we were not in a mood to develop our negatives just then.

And whilst my wife put the finishing touch to her sketches, I sought out mine worthy host in the bar, who entertained me with pleasant gossip and local information over a glass of whiskey and a friendly pipe.

CHAPTER VII

A pleasant country—A ruined church—Tewkesbury—A quaint half-timbered hostel—“Beauty and the Beast” in buildings—Deserted roads—A moated manor-house—An old-time tradition—A place of sanctuary—The Malvern Hills—An Arcadian ideal—Eastnor Castle—Ruins to order—Ledbury—A curious church tower—A unique epitaph—The right of private judgment.

FROM Broadway we drove to Tewkesbury; and a lovely drive it was. At first our road led us through an undulating country, dotted with gray old farmsteads, half smothered in a wealth of greenery; sometimes indeed we could only catch a glimpse of a time-toned gable or a great chimney-stack just peeping above a sea of leafy foliage. What charming houses they seemed! If farming is not a very profitable occupation, at least in such a land it ought to be a pleasant one. A country in which shady woods and tilled fields, green meadows and fruitful orchards, hamlets and cottage-homes were mixed in endless variety, with peeps of purple-blue hills beyond. A slumberous land, whose restful quiet was only broken by the distant lowing of cattle, the singing of birds, the rustling of the wind-stirred trees, the occasional chiming of a far-away clock, and the rumbling of our own wheels.

The villages we passed had an old-world unsophisticated look, the cottage-doors opened with a latch, the farmhouses were pictures of contentment, the fields and hedgerows were gay with wild flowers, and all things spoke of long human occupancy and peaceful abiding. The scenery was idyllic, a pastoral poem: not grand nor yet romantic, only beautiful beyond the vision of a dream. It was a lotus-eating land, whose deep tranquillity sank into our very souls. As we drove along our eyes delighted wandered

“O'er deep waving fields and pastures green,
With gentle slopes and groves between,”

and we could not help wondering to ourselves how it was that the perverse Briton should rush abroad as he does in search of fresh scenes and leave so much spreading loveliness at his own doors unseen.

On our way we noticed a primitive inn, entitled the Hobnails, an unfamiliar name to us. It was curious the number of inn-signs we came upon this journey with uncommon appellations. Farther on we passed another wayside hostel, The Queen's Head, kept by one I. Drinkwater, surely a singular name for a landlord who lives by selling beer!

At the hamlet of Little Washbourne we pulled up to inspect a tiny deserted-looking church, which stood, without even a wall to bound it, right in the centre of a field. The door of the lonely church was locked, but we managed to get a glance inside through a broken window; and what a scene of

desolation was before us : God's house with a hole in the roof, through which the rain came, the floor covered with thick dirt, the rotting communion-table fouled by birds, an old marble monument on the chancel wall crumbling away, the inscription and some ornaments belonging to it already gone ; and not a soul anywhere about to inquire of why these things were so.

Tewkesbury, which we reached about mid-day, is a picturesque old town ; but its picturesqueness is gradually being improved away. It still, however, possesses some curious half-timbered houses with projecting upper gables ; some indeed project so much as to give one an uncomfortable idea that they might fall over. But somehow after the unspoilt charms of Broadway, Tewkesbury was disappointing. Broadway is unique ; Tewkesbury is slowly growing much like any other provincial town. It is losing its ancient individuality. After the grand old Norman abbey that stands in solemn stateliness as it has stood through changeful ages, with the gathered bloom of centuries upon its ancient walls, the building that pleased us most in Tewkesbury was the very picturesque Bell Inn, an ancient half-timbered structure with three great gables in front, and having the date 1696 inscribed thereon beneath the initials I. I. K., presumably those of its builder. A painted notice attached to this quaint hostel runs as follows :—

This house is mentioned in *John Halifax* as being
the residence of Abel Fletcher, the tanner.

The celebrated Bowling Green is attached.

Leaving Tewkesbury, we crossed the Severn by a gray weathered old stone bridge of many arches. Here a striking contrast was afforded us between the picturesque buildings of the past and the prosaic structures of the present. Looking back, we had an impressive view of the beautiful old abbey as it stood out grandly against the sky in all its sombre glory, its hoary Norman tower, raised above all meaner things, was gilded by the soft sunshine. The picture was perfect; but glancing in another direction, close by the riverside a huge manufactory obtrusively asserted its unwelcome presence, a mass of hideous brickwork, attached to which were some corrugated iron sheds (the very perfection of ugliness), and above all this unsightly conglomeration of brick and iron towered a tall chimney belching forth thick black smoke. The ancient solemn abbey, the very poetry of building; the modern manufactory, the very essence of ugliness: what an antithesis! The one building raised to the glory of God without the thought of worldly gain; the other constructed on strictly commercial principles for the profit of man. Looking in the opposite direction, we had another startling contrast: the beauty and graceful outline of the old stone bridge serving to emphasise the ungainliness of a modern railway iron girder viaduct but a short distance away. Sad it is to see such plain evidence that the needs of a competitive age should be so adverse to beauty.

Of course we did not fail to inspect once again (for we had seen it before) the glorious old Tewkes-

bury abbey, finer than many a cathedral; but I must be excused from giving here any account of this grand monument of a past ecclesiastical supremacy; for such I will refer my readers to the guide-books, as I do not desire to enter into any competition with them, besides my object is rather to describe unfamiliar spots and places than those that are, or at any rate should be, well known to every Englishman at all acquainted with his own land.

After a time the sides of our road became grass-grown, and only the centre of the erst busy and wide highway was kept clear for traffic. What a change since the days of the coaches, when the whole breadth of the road was none too much for the passing mails, posting conveyances, and stage waggons!

About half-way to Ledbury, to which town we were bound, we made a short détour of about a quarter of a mile from our route to inspect the very interesting and curious half-timbered manor-house of Birts Morton Court, some portions of which, notably the fortified gateway, are of the fourteenth century, and little (if any of it) later than the sixteenth. This was formerly the seat of the one-time distinguished and powerful family of Nanfan. A warlike race, that after a brilliant career of some generations seem suddenly and inexplicably, when in the very height of their glory and fame, to have become impoverished, and to have disappeared. No less a person than Cardinal Wolsey in his early life was a chaplain to the

Nansans here. The old mansion, now converted into a farmhouse, is situated low in a hollow, possibly in order to ensure a plentiful supply of water for the moat, and also to prevent it being drained by any besiegers.

Crossing a stone structure that has taken the place of the ancient drawbridge, we found ourselves before a massive embattled gateway, a substantial bit of masonry, and though some four centuries old, apparently as strong now as ever, and certainly more picturesque, for Time with a gentle loving hand has mellowed its harsher features down, has chipped off an odd corner here and there, has tinted its stern walls with golden and silver lichens, has made it green in places with mosses and grasses, so that what was once only forbidding is now beautiful. The original heavy oak door with its mighty iron hinges studded all over with great square-headed nails still remains *in situ*. This we found opened into a paved courtyard. Ringing a bell here, we asked if we might be allowed to sketch the old place; this we did as an excuse to see if it were possible to get a glance over the interior. A bright little maiden of fourteen summers or so, the farmer's daughter, we presumed, answered our summons, and not only gave us permission to sketch the building but offered to show us over it. This was almost more than we had ventured to hope for, but "fortune favours the brave," or impudent, for I do not see why because he lives in an interesting old house the owner should be expected

to show it to any one who may choose to ask that favour, or why he should have his privacy intruded upon by total strangers.

Entering, we were first shown into a fine panelled room, the wainscot being richly carved. This is, I think, considering all things, the most beautiful and interesting panelled chamber I have ever seen, for not only is the carving of the woodwork very excellent, but it is in a perfect state of preservation. The chimney-piece here is also of oak, richly but not over-ornamented with sculptured figures and heraldic devices. This reaches up to an enriched frieze. In the centre of it, carved in high relief and "coloured proper," are the arms of the Nanfans, to the left those of the Cornwalls, and to the right those of the Harleys,—families to which the Nanfans were closely allied; so at least we were told by our intelligent guide, who proved to be far superior to the usual run of professional ones. All around the frieze of the room at short stated intervals are painted various coats of arms, and beneath them the names of the families to whom they belong. The reason for these being so displayed our guide could not say, so we were left to our own conjectures. Possibly a court of some kind was held here, and the coats of arms marked the place where the seats of the lords, knights, and gentlemen who owned them were placed, but this is a mere guess. We copied the list of the names, and I give them here, as they may be of interest to some of my readers having antiquarian or historic tastes. It is curious to note the subtle distinctions between "Esquier,"

"Gent," and plain "Mr." Two gentlemen are, strangely enough, both mistered and esquired!

Mr Iohn blout of Eye Esq.
Ye Lord Copley.
Sr Henry Polle Knyght.
Sr John Skudamore Kngt.
Walter Vaigham of Hayest Esq.
Mr Roger Minors Essq.
John Bridges Esquier.
Bromwhich of Bromsburro Esquier.
John Wyet Gent.
William Rudhall of rudhall esquier.
Sr Thomas Throgmorton Knyght.
Sr James Crofte Knyght.
Thomas Cornwall esquier.
Baskerville of Erdesley esq.
Thomas Harley Esquier.

Before we left this ancient chamber, around whose walls past associations seemed to cling, our guide pointed out to us a secret hole or hiding-place at one end of the mantelpiece. This is now put to the less romantic use of a cupboard. No house of old of any importance seems to have been considered complete without a hiding-hole of some sort; they were almost as much a necessity of the times as is a bath-room to a modern villa. We were also shown here a curiosity in the shape of a horse-shoe with an attachment in iron below. This extraordinary piece of workmanship was dredged up, a short time ago, from the bottom of the moat, and the conjecture is that it was designed to aid the escape of some fugitive, as a rider whose horse was shod with a set of these would only leave behind him on the soft roads the innocent impressions of cows'

hoofs. One would imagine though that it would have made it rather bad travelling for the unfortunate horse.

Next we were taken along some ancient passages and up stairways worn concave with the tread of bygone generations to the old hall, divided now into smaller rooms. In its original state this must have been a grand apartment. The walls are decorated with boldly moulded plaster-work, conspicuous amongst which is a large representation of the coat of arms of "Thomas Cornwall, Baron of Burford," the name being painted beneath the heraldic device in the same manner as those in the panelled room we first saw. Then we were led to the banqueting-hall, a handsome and spacious chamber, the floor of which, when we were there, was covered with cheeses. "To what base uses may we return." Farmers are not always of a poetic turn of mind. As a rule, indeed, they are obliged to look on the practical rather than on the romantic side of things, otherwise it seems a pity that this grand old hall should be converted into a store-place for cheeses. Better this, however, than that it should be left to go to uncared-for ruin.

The glory of Birts Morton Court is a thing of the past; its picturesqueness, however, is a reality of the present. If only its time-stained walls had lips to speak, what stories, stranger than many an imagined romance, might they not relate; for not only were the Nanfans a family of renown, but they were an adventurous race, and there are some curious traditions handed down and gruesome stories

told connected with the old moated manor-house. I must try and find room for one, not because it is of startling interest, but because it seems to be fairly well authenticated. It appears then that there were two suitors to the hand of one of the fair daughters of John Nanfan. The lady did not disdain their attentions, but could not make up her mind which of the rivals she would favour. I do not exactly commend her conduct, but possibly she had her own very good reasons for remaining so undecided. However that may be, the two lovers, in the ready fashion of the time, agreed to settle the affair between themselves by a duel, which they fought in a field in the adjoining parish of Berrow; the outcome being that they both fell mortally wounded, and to this day the field in which the encounter took place is called the "Bloody Meadow." The lady, horrified at the result, and feeling that in some measure she had been to blame, shut herself up in the old manor-house, lived there the life of a recluse, and died there unmarried. After her death, upon her will being opened, it was found that she had left some land "the produce of which should be forever devoted to the payment of a minister for annually delivering a sermon in Berrow parish church on the crime of duelling." We were given to understand that ever since such a sermon has been preached in Berrow church, and that the payment out of the land demised for that special purpose is still regularly made. It would therefore seem that the grim story rests on a more solid foundation of fact than such legends mostly do.

BIRTS MORTON COURT



Close by the historic manor-house stands the ancient church of Birts Morton. The olden door of this time-worn structure still retains a rusty ring, and thereby hangs a little history. In former times any one fleeing from justice who could gain and take hold of this ring had the right of sanctuary, and was free thereupon from arrest or punishment. The church contains some interesting monuments to the Nanfans, and a huge one to Admiral Caldwell. The interior impresses one with its remarkably antique appearance. From the corner of the churchyard looking down is perhaps to be had the best general view of the old manor-house, with its wide weed-grown moat, gray weathered gateway, and time-toned half-timbered walls; a fine example of the period when in truth every Englishman's house was his castle. A home fortified against a sudden emergency, rather than a stronghold fitted to withstand a long *siege*, yet, properly defended, not to be captured without one.

Leaving Birts Morton, we once more proceeded on our way. The Malvern Hills now loomed up mistily before us in a mystery of gray that caused them to appear almost mountainous. What a curious effect mystery has upon our conceptions of magnitude! I have seen Snowdon dimly showing through rising and wreathing mists look higher than a Swiss alp. By losing detail we gain in mass. Grandeur does not belong to size alone, but equally to form; and there is a grandeur of distance as well as of mere height. So those great rounded Malvern Hills stretching far away into the dim dreamy dis-

tance were as impressive a sight to us as a snow-clad peak rising upwards to the sky. There is a sense of the sublime in great distances as well as in great heights; the far-reaching, grandly rounded outlines of our too little appreciated South Downs are truly majestic to him who can see and understand them aright,—they seem to stretch away to infinity. The height of the highest peak is limited.

The bright blueness of the sky overhead, the green breadths of meadow-lands, the rich tints of the corn-fields waving around us like golden seas in the soft west wind, the gray stone farmsteads and half-timbered cottages with their lichen-laden roofs, the purple-gray hills beyond—a deeper purple in their shadowy recesses,—formed altogether a prospect full of colour and very restful to look upon. There seemed to be a spell of great peace over all the landscape that infused itself into us. It was all so reposeful and beautiful—beautiful but not exciting. There was an ample variety of scenery, yet not so varied or stimulating as to cause a sort of restless desire to see everything, simply a blending of purple hills and many-tinted woods, of fields and orchards, of happy homes of men, and scattered time-mellowed hamlets—almost an Arcadian ideal.

Then as we drove quietly along drinking in all the tranquil loveliness of the thoroughly English pastoral, we found ourselves crossing the long range of the Malvern Hills through a sort of miniature pass, on reaching the summit of which we had a wide prospect before us over the green and fruitful

county of Hereford, bounded by the changeful outline of the rugged Welsh hills. It might have been fancy, for fancy counts for a good deal in this world, but it seemed to us when we had crossed the Malvern Hills from east to west that we entered into another atmosphere; the air was more balmy—balmy, yet fresh and bracing. One short half-hour had taken us into a different climate.

Descending the Herefordshire side of the pass, Eastnor Castle soon came into view. A modern-antique structure built in imitation of a stern feudal stronghold of the time of Edward I., with massive walls and flanking towers (forms without any functions in the present peaceful day); these strong substantial walls and towers pierced, be it noted, by large pointed Gothic windows! Could anything be more architecturally inconsistent? A better example of how not to build a modern residence there could scarcely be. What is the use of slavishly copying the main features of a structure (the outcome of the necessity of times so utterly different from our own), and attempting to adapt it to modern needs at a certain sacrifice of comfort and convenience? This is not serious architecture, it is an expensive sham in building; it would be almost as consistent to discard our modern dress and encase oneself in antiquated armour. The whole thing has a savour of Wardour Street. A modern medieval castle is an anachronism: a freak in building, a meaningless joke in stone—and an expensive one. On a former journey we actually came upon a modern ruined castle (if

I may use the term), for it was built in imitation of a ruin, with the avowed object of adding an interest to the estate, and as being a romantic (save the mark!) object in the landscape as viewed from the owner's residence, which, by the way, was of the eighteenth century, and therefore older than the pseudo-ruined medieval castle, which was of yesterday. Next we shall be having nineteenth-century "ruined" abbeys built for the sake of picturesqueness!

In the churchyard of Eastnor is a tombstone recording by an inscription thereon the virtues of one Ann Drinkwater, who died 12th May 1829. This runs as follows:—

Pale death can Scarsley find Another
So good a wife and tender Mother
In all her Hactions well Inclined
She can't be soon put out of Mind.

The school-board had not come into existence then!

Ledbury, which we reached about mid-day, is an interesting old town, wherein we found comfortable quarters at the Feathers Hotel, an ancient hostelry that has evidently undergone many internal alterations in order to adapt itself to changing requirements. It is just these after-thoughts and necessary modifications to suit other times which give to a building that pleasant touch of character that no new house, with its history still to make, can ever possess.

Being in an apple-growing district here, we ordered with our dinner some sparkling cider in bottle, on the principle of tasting and testing the

wine of the country wherever we go. The cider was less expensive, and probably not more unwholesome, than cheap champagne. The waitress pronounced it to be "excellent," but opinions in this world differ. On the whole, I think that the traveller in rural England had better stick to ale. This can generally be had good anywhere, so can tea; but coffee at country inns is, as a rule, a failure.

Ledbury contains many quaint old wood-framed houses, and a very picturesque and ancient black-and-white timbered market-hall. The carved gables, doorways, windows, porches, and projecting upper stories of these old-time buildings tempted us to spend the whole afternoon sketching instead of proceeding on to Hereford as we had intended. However, what mattered that? We had no definite itinerary to carry out, our time was our own, and as it best pleased us to spend the afternoon sketching picturesque and quaint architectural bits, we did so.

Ledbury boasts of an interesting old church, made up of many styles of architecture, from the stern and massive Norman to the light and graceful early English. It contains many fine and some curious monuments. On one old brass, dated 1641, we read, "the county of Heriff," for Hereford, we presumed. The various ways that the counties are spelt on ancient tombstones are astonishing, but I think this beats the record; it is not even phonetic. Another quaint brass of 1621 commences "Dead, yes and worm'd"; and a tombstone on the floor records the amazing fact that a certain John Hall

"died 31 April 1734. Aet. 73." How he managed to do that I cannot say.

The tower of the church is detached from the main building, and stands strangely apart by itself. This, the clerk told us, was formerly used for a prison. It did not seem to us that it would make a very large one, so that it must be presumed that the Ledbury people were very law-abiding in the old days. As we were leaving the church the clerk remarked (*à propos* of nothing in our conversation, however) that the inhabitants of the place were very good churchgoers "when they like the parson, but not otherwise." Whereupon a young curate, who was inspecting the church at the same time, said, "That's private judgment with a vengeance." We ventured to suggest that possibly the Ledbury people had made up their minds never to like the parson for the time being, and thus exercise their right of private judgment as to not attending church in perpetuity. The clerk made no reply; possibly he was in awe of the young curate, but he gave us a knowing look as much as to say, "You have hit the right nail on the head."

CHAPTER VIII

A mountain panorama—Hop-gardens and hoppers—An ancient oak—Hereford Cathedral—A knight with two Orders of the Garter—Norman masons' marks—Copy of the Gospels in Anglo-Saxon—A new rendering of an old text—A saint with three skulls—A library of chained books—A very wonderful map—Epitaphs—Monastic ruins—A preacher's cross—An ancient hospital—A wayside cross—A half-timbered church steeple—On the banks of the Wye.

LEAVING Ledbury, our road at first took us upon high ground, and our elevated position afforded us charming views of the west side of the Malvern Hills, whilst ahead we had a fine panorama of the blue Welsh mountains. Another two days and we should be in the midst of them, amongst the heather and pine-clad heights, and within sight and sound of roaring torrents. Lovers of wild nature as we are, we rejoiced at the thought, and I verily believe that our hearts beat just a trifle faster at the knowledge that we should so soon be exploring the romantic beauties of wild South Wales; for this had the charm of being almost an unknown land to us, and if we might judge from the sketch-book of an artist-friend, as lovely a country as the eye of a traveller could desire to look upon.

But to return to ourselves. A few miles brought

us to a small hamlet bearing the rather curious title of Trumpet ; at least so we judged from an inscription that we observed there upon a weathered old half-timbered house, which ran : "Trumpet Post Office and Original Trumpet Inn." The place was not marked on our maps. From this spot to Hereford we passed through an exceedingly pretty country ; our road was both undulating and winding, and each bend of it afforded us a fresh revelation of rural beauty. We were now in a country of hop-gardens and big orchards, and ever and again the curious conical forms of the oast-house tops peeped out of a mass of luxuriant greenery. These, indeed, so abounded as to give quite a special character to the views. In this portion of Herefordsire an oast-house seems to be an essential part of the prospect, almost as certain to catch the vision in one direction or another as is a windmill in a South Down panorama.

Hoppers were busy at work in the gardens, and a very picturesque sight it is to see the gathering of the hop crop. Men, women, and children were all busily at work, talking and sometimes singing the while. The children seemed to enjoy the picking, and the ripple of their laughter and playful chatter came wafted to us now and again on the light breeze as we drove along. It was a genuine pleasure for once to see labour gladsome, toil turned into merry-making. Even the strictest teetotaller, had such a one been with us, must have owned to this bright side of the drink question ; the bringing of poor families

and children out of the crowded courts and alleys of smoky towns into the sunny fields and pure fresh air, and the providing them with a healthy and easy employment, for hop-picking is surely the lightest of labour? Indeed, the whole thing appeared to us more like a pleasant picnic than serious toil. After all, I am not sure whether the best way to make England sober is not to brew good, light, wholesome ale; it is the spirits, but too often new and raw, that cause the main mischief, and I think it would be well to compel the publican to sell hot tea and coffee besides intoxicating drinks should his customers prefer it. We cannot make an Englishman sober by Act of Parliament or any grandmotherly legislation, but we can provide so that he has genuine ale and spirits to drink, and by requiring the publican, as I have remarked, to supply tea and coffee, we can give him the choice of a non-intoxicating drink when he enters the public-house for refreshment.

There are few prettier sights than a ripe hop-garden, with the vines twining round innumerable poles, and their golden clustering cones dangling in the still air, or dancing in the breeze, as the case may be. A vineyard, in spite of all that the poets have sung in its praise, is not to be compared for beauty with an English hop-garden; but the vineyard is abroad, and, as in many other things, I presume "'tis distance lends enchantment to the view."

Driving on through this pleasant land, we passed by the pretty village of Tarrington, where we noticed a fine century-old oak standing alone on a grass-

grown corner of the roadside. This aged tree, though its trunk was hollow and rent, was carefully boarded up to preserve it, and the great outspreading branches above were held together by iron chains. Whether there is any special history or tradition connected with this we could not learn, but it was pleasant to see so much care taken to cherish such a grand old tree.

Next we came to Lugwardine, another pretty village possessing some charming half-timbered houses; from this a steep descent brought us to the little lazy river Lugg, crossing which we traversed some flat marshy ground and suddenly found ourselves in the suburbs of Hereford, and soon afterwards we pulled up at the doors of the Green Dragon, an ancient inn mentioned in our road-book, and that still provides excellent entertainment for the latter-day traveller.

Hereford possesses some very interesting relics of the past: amongst others the ruins of the Black Friars' monastery with its restored preaching cross; the Coningsby Hospital, erected in 1614; the White Cross, and other domestic buildings of ancient date, more or less quaint and picturesque but of less importance. Of course the chief glory of the city is its cathedral, greatly injured by that arch-destroyer Wyatt, and saved by Sir Gilbert Scott, who only restored to preserve and uphold, and to whom all lovers of ecclesiastical architecture are under a deep debt of gratitude.

Our first visit was to the cathedral, and we were fortunate in finding an exceptionally intelligent

verger to show us over it ; moreover, we had him all to ourselves, and this was no small advantage. Here I may remark that I have no intention of giving a full or particular account of this grand old pile, for is that not the special province of the guide-book compiler ? and I have no wish nor ambition to trespass on his special domain. For full and detailed particulars of the cathedral I must therefore refer my readers to one of the many excellent handbooks published. I shall content myself with merely mentioning some few amongst the many things that specially interested us, and calling attention to certain other things that struck us as possibly of a nature to be overlooked or ignored by the usual run of guide-books.

On entering the cathedral we came first to the fine altar-tomb of Sir Richard Pembridge, a Knight of the Garter ; one of the many gallant warriors who fought at Poitiers. He is represented in an effigy of alabaster and in a complete suit of armour, the carving of which is very beautiful, and the details carefully rendered even to a buckle. His head is shown resting on a tilting helmet. The verger told us that the original helmet hung over the tomb till forty years ago. A pity it is not there now ; and Why not ? was a question we could not help asking ourselves. Why should it have been removed from its proper resting-place to add to a private collection of armour ? for according to our guide this is what has become of it. The effigy is unique in one respect, for the gallant knight is represented with a Garter on *both* his legs, instead

of only on the right one, as is correct. The history of this curious departure from what is proper is thus accounted for. Originally this fine tomb was in the church of the now ruined Black Friars' monastery, but at the time of the Reformation it was removed from there to the cathedral. During the removal the left leg chanced to get broken and lost; this leg was some time afterwards restored by a local sculptor, who, knowing no better, faithfully copied the right one, Garter and all! There is also another peculiarity about this effigy worth noting that might easily escape the attention of those not versed in ancient armour. Both the steel boots (sollerets is, I believe, the correct term) have rounded ends. Now the mailed shoes of a knight of the period were long and pointed, in order that he might have a better hold on the stirrup, the pointed end affording a claw-like grip. During the removal of the effigy it would seem that the point got broken off, and was rounded, and so the sculptor who supplied the missing leg copied it thus.

In one of the transept walls we noticed a Norman stone fireplace. This, I believe, is unusual if not unique in a cathedral, being in a position where it could not possibly serve the purpose of warming the building. We could only conjecture that this was probably employed for baking the altar-bread. On this grand old wall, too, carefully preserved by Sir Gilbert Scott during his restorations, are the original Norman masons' marks. These greatly interested us, as they date back to

about 1100. The favourite marks are a bow and arrow, and a circle enclosing a cross; all these are rudely but plainly cut, and as sharp now as they were when the stern Norman masons' chisels first made them long centuries ago.

Then the verger showed and explained to us some rare treasures carefully preserved in a glass case. Amongst other precious possessions there we saw a copy of the Gospels written in Anglo-Saxon, dated the end of the eighth century,—this has a memorandum inscribed on the cover as to the result of a law case, so our guide informed us,—also a copy of the *Hereford Use* of the thirteenth century. This most interesting MS. was found (the verger still being my authority) by a gentleman on a second-hand bookstall in Drury Lane, who purchased it for a mere trifle and presented it to the cathedral library. We were also shown a copy of the Wycliffe Bible, done by Nicolas de Hereford, in which "shall neither drink wine nor cider" is given in place of the proper rendering of the text "shall neither drink wine nor strong drink." By this it would appear that the Hereford people of old were addicted to taking cider, possibly to a greater extent than was good for them. Amongst other things we saw an old parchment document of the year 840, granting lands for a monastery at Bromyard; an enamelled reliquary of the ninth century,—whatever virtues the relics it contained possessed, they do not appear to have had the power of preserving themselves. Possibly relics in this practical age are rather out of date; indeed, their multiplication

in medieval times was attended with difficulties, for it is on record that one pilgrim saw as many as three skulls of John the Baptist; the explanation given by the Church being that God had multiplied these precious relics for the benefit of the faithful! The medieval Church is, however, hard run by a certain aboriginal guide of a local museum, who, it is stated (and the story is printed, so it must be true), showed one of his patrons a skull, saying that "it was Oliver Cromwell's, but added "There is a more perfect one at ——" naming another museum!

In this glass case we observed as well two unknown bishops' rings of the fifteenth century taken out of their tombs at the restoration of the cathedral, and the chalice, paten, and head of the pastoral staff (beautifully engraved) of Bishop Swinfield, likewise taken from his coffin. The Chapter Library here is also well worth seeing, with its two thousand volumes of priceless MSS. and early printed works chained to the shelves, as was the ancient custom when books were a precious possession.

Perhaps one of the most curious things to be seen in the cathedral is an ancient map of the world. This is truly a most extraordinary production and absolutely unique; it is religiously preserved in a frame under glass, and but for the explanations of our excellent guide, we should have made but little of it. This wonderful map is executed on a single sheet of vellum, mounted on an oak panel, by rough guess-work some five feet

square. It represents the world as a flat, encircled by the ocean. The continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa alone are given; America was evidently unknown to the designer, who had peculiar notions of geography, which, however, is not so much to be wondered at considering that the map was executed in the year 1300, by Richard de Haldingham, presumably, from the inscription on the vellum in old and puzzling Norman-French, which runs as follows:—

Tuz ki cest estorie
 Ou oyront ou liront ou ueront
 Prient a ihesu en deyete
 De Richard de Haldingham e de Lafford eyt pite
 Ki lat fet e compasse
 Ki ioie en cel li seit doue.

This has been rendered into modern English verse by the late Rev. G. F. Townsend of Leominster thus:—

May all who this fair history
 Shall either hear, or read, or see,
 Pray to Jesus Christ in Deity
 Richard of Haldingham and Lafford to pity;
 That to him for aye be given
 The joy and happiness of heaven.

There is, however, but little doubt that Richard de Haldingham was the *nom de plume* of Richard de Bello, and that he called himself Haldingham and Lafford from the name of the stall he held in Lincoln Cathedral up to the year 1283, after which he held for some time a stall in Hereford Cathedral; and it was doubtless during his tenure of the latter that the map was executed. Respect-

ing this quaint production, it is difficult to know where to begin or end in describing it, and I can only give here a very incomplete account of its contents, for to explain it in detail would take a whole chapter or more.

Jerusalem, then, is represented as being in the centre of the world, above it is the crucifixion, and below, Bethlehem with the manger. The river Jordan is shown, and the Dead Sea with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah at the bottom. The Red Sea is actually painted red! Truly this is of rather a brick colour now, but was doubtless originally of a bright vermillion. Moses is shown with the tablets of the Law, and there is a picture of the Ark with Noah and his family looking out of the window. Lot's wife is there as a pillar of salt, and much else besides relating to Bible history. Then the inhabitants of the different countries are carefully depicted (and very peculiar inhabitants they are), also other denizens of them, beasts, birds, and fishes, and monsters of strange form. We have in one country men with no mouths, who live on the smell of fruit; men whose heads grow behind their shoulders, and who live in holes of the earth. In India we find a race of men with only one leg and foot; but such a huge foot! This acts as an umbrella to shield these eccentric mortals from the heat of the sun, and for this purpose they have to lie on their backs. Then there are men with tails that they carry in their hands, mermaids, one-eyed people, and various other peculiar beings. Amongst animals and birds we have in the different

countries, dragons, minotaurs, salamanders, mandrakes, unicorns, sphinxes, centaurs, griffins, etc., besides a creature (called by the designer) the "Mintichoras," having a human head and the body of a lion; the "earle," a most undesirable animal with long horns; an extraordinary species of bird called the "avis cireneus," with many others unknown even to fable.

I have forgotten in the multitude of things to say that the Garden of Eden is shown on the top of the map as a round island with Eve therein eating of the forbidden fruit; also Joseph's granaries in Egypt, as well as the Pyramids. Crete is pictured with its famous labyrinth, and Sicily with the whirlpool of Charybdis.

In the British Isles, amongst the number of cities shown, Hereford is conspicuous; many of the hills and rivers are also delineated, though in positions that would drive a modern geographer mad. In Wales, Snowdon is marked very plainly, and curiously enough St. Davids, to which we were bound. But *quantum sufficit*, one might exhaust pages without giving a tithe of the remarkable things that are shown on the map, which is one of the greatest curiosities we have come across for many a long day.

There were many other things that we saw in the cathedral that interested us, notably the monument to Sir Peter de Grandison, showing him with a helmet of chain-mail and other uncommon details as to armour. There is the usual faithful hound at his feet, but strangely enough this is not given

as asleep, or dead, as is the rule, but alive and licking his master's feet. There is also another rare feature about this monument; the nose of it is perfect. In nearly all such ancient effigies this feature is more or less damaged (when not wanting altogether, as is most generally the case). It is very unusual to find one thus intact, so unusual indeed that I cannot recall another instance of our having come across a perfect one before.

We also noticed a large stone slab on the floor with the matrices of two very fine brasses of a knight and a lady, their shapes still showing plainly in outline. At the foot of the knight is a dog, and at the foot of his lady a cat, and between them is a drawn dagger. There is possibly more in this than would appear to a casual observer. It struck us as a bit of drollery in stone. It suggested to us that the man and his wife led a cat-and-dog's life, and were at daggers-drawn with one another; we might be wrong, but the inference seemed obvious to any one acquainted with the playful spirit and strange conceits of medieval times, when men knew how to tell, or hint, a story in carving. Old monuments and inscriptions have often a hidden meaning, a tale to tell, to those who can read them. We came once upon an inscription to a wife by her husband with the laconic wording "Peace at last." Did this mean to infer that the husband was at peace at last? it almost insinuated it. Then there is another much-quoted epitaph that we discovered at Bideford in Devon, if I remember aright, which runs—

Here lies the body of Mary Sexton,
Who pleased many a man, but never vex'd one ;
Not like the woman who lies under the next stone.

This is uncharitable, but plain.

Whilst on the subject of epitaphs I am tempted to give here a sham Latin one, merely for the sake of its cleverness. This is really all in English after the "Hic Jacet." I will, however, leave it for my readers to puzzle out the reading for themselves. Such ingenious conceits are at least interesting. This then is it—

Hic Jacet
A · PVBLI · CANALI
ASPO · ORT
Obit Christi anno XXX.
Aletha te veritas te de qvali vasto !
His hev vasa Jovi alto perago
O doneat acv porcanorvm
An da preci ?

O. V. S.

,, R. I. P.

Leaving the cathedral, we started in search of the ruins of the Black Friars' monastery, and found them in one of the city suburbs about a mile away. The ruins are but of small extent, and do not call for any special remark: in the enclosed grounds around them, however, is a very interesting, though much restored, Preacher's Cross, that belonged to the order. This consists of a tall shaft rising out of a flight of stone steps, the shaft being surmounted by a cross and surrounded by a Gothic structure of several open arches. Mounting the steps, the preacher could address the people through any of these arches. Probably he would walk from one

to another whilst he discoursed to the crowd. In the restoration, whether from ignorance or not I cannot say, the doorway for the priest to enter by has been built up. This is a pity, as the original intention of the structure is done away with. One might as consistently restore a feudal castle and build up the entrance gateway. But restorers are above consistency.

Near by the monastic ruins stands the ancient and much weather-worn Coningsby Hospital, a picturesque bit of building, on the outer wall of which may yet be seen the original foundation stone with the date 1614 thereon. One of the old red-coated men, inmates of the hospital, came forward and offered to show us over it, doubtless with a view to a tip. First he took us to the ancient chapel, a rather gloomy place; close to the ceiling of this he pointed out a sliding door that opened from the old infirmary (disused now) on a story above, so that the invalided could see the mass performed. The approach to the infirmary was up a wooden ladder, up which the sick had to climb, or to be drawn by ropes! This would hardly suit modern philanthropic ideas.

About a mile out of Hereford, by the wayside, we came to another tall stone cross springing from the centre of a flight of steps. This is known as the White Cross, and was erected on the spot in 1347, to mark the place where the markets were held during a severe plague which at that time raged in Hereford.

In about another mile we passed by what we

took to be a farmhouse, but a large painted board thereon proclaimed it to be "The English Fruit and Rose Company." We could only trust that fruit-farming and rose-growing were more profitable than ordinary farming; what, we wondered, would be the next idea "to make the land pay"? One agriculturist told me that he found the best paying thing was to take pupils. This struck us as a curious way of making a living by teaching an unprofitable trade!

Farther on we noticed peeping above some woods a quaint half-timbered tower. Pulling up here to explore, a short stroll along a country lane brought us to the church of Stretton Sugwas, and we discovered that the quaint tower belonged to that church. This departure from the usual form of ecclesiastical building interested us, it struck an original note; the effect was pleasing and picturesque. It is always a relief, especially in an age of uniformity, to find an original idea in building, if it is only suitable to its purpose and worthy, for however beautiful in themselves are the gray stone towers and steeples of our churches, still they bear, more or less, a family likeness one to another. It was therefore a pleasant surprise to discover for once a change from the familiar forms of church towers.

Having secured a sketch of this unique building, we proceeded on our way. At one spot we passed a rural inn called the Nelson, the landlord of which we noticed was named Bywater, though manifestly he did not get his living by water;

another instance of many we met with on our journey of names that are not exactly appropriate to the callings of their owners.

Then, as we journeyed on through sheltering woods, suddenly to the left of us a little glen opened out, affording us a peep below of a winding river gleaming in the bright sunshine. The little wooded glen, down which a tiny stream found its mossy way, the silver stretch of river so quietly gliding along with the blue hills beyond, formed a most entrancing picture, and the charm of it was that we came upon it so unexpectedly. We called a halt and got out our map to see the name of the river, and found somewhat to our astonishment that it was none other than the famous Wye. We had no idea that we were near such a lovely stream ; little wonder we deemed it so beautiful !

Wandering down the glen, after passing a romantic cottage built of the trunks of trees and thatched, we reached the side of the rippling river, and strolling along its wooded banks, made our way knee-deep through yellow bracken, till, finding a fallen tree, we seated ourselves thereon, and at our leisure drank in the full beauty of the scene. It delighted us simply to remain there doing nothing but listening to the musical gurgling of the gliding waters. There was an indescribable feeling of untold restfulness in watching the quiet flow of the river (such a rare and happy combination of movement with repose). What a silvery sparkle it had in the glad sunlight, what a cool transparent green in shade and shallow ! How it reflected the

great patches of brilliant white and blue of the sky above on its smooth surface, and doubled thereon its sedgy borders and banks of many-tinted woods. Then our eyes wandered to the velvety green meadows beyond, and still farther away to the glints of warm sunshine that ever and again raked the distant dreamy hills. The charm of the scene was its lonely loveliness and sweet silence, a silence undisturbed by any sounds louder than the companionable singing of birds, the droning of wandering bees, or the occasional splash of a leaping trout.

But enchanting though the spot was we could not rest there the whole day, we had still a goodly number of miles to accomplish before reaching our night's destination, besides we were getting unromantically hungry, and that was a reminder that very possibly our horses were getting hungry too, so it behoved us to get along, for we had no very clear idea as to where we might find quarters on our way. We noted on the map, however, that one or two villages were marked through which we should pass, so we drove on trusting to good fortune that in one of these we might procure "entertainment for man and beast." At the worst we knew that we could picnic by the way, and whilst we had been admiring the view, our horses had been sampling some of the green grass by the roadside, so that they had not been altogether without some light refreshment.

CHAPTER IX

Byford — An interesting old house — Bredwardine — Enigmatical sculptures — King Arthur's Stone — A picturesque glen — Old mills — The Golden Valley — Hay town and castle — Going to market on pony-back — Taffy, his weaknesses and virtues — The Black Mountains — Curious names — Glasbury — A noted inn of the past — Welsh bridges — The Brecon Beacons — Fishing — Angler's tales.

LEAVING the picturesque glen and our quiet river-side retreat, we drove on through a country gradually growing more hilly and more beautiful. At the little village of Byford, just off our road, we stopped a short time to make a sketch of an interesting old house that we discovered there. This is now apparently a farmstead, but doubtless originally it was a manor-house of some importance, judging from the coats of arms carved in stone over the great arched doorway. This ancient home,时间-toned into a delicious gray, with its ivy-clad gables, mighty chimney-stacks, solid roof of slabs, and grand mullioned windows, was in truth a picture in stone. When will modern architects learn to build pictures? They strive after beauty, I know, but too often the result is a freak in brick and mortar, something to wonder at, not to admire.

After a time we came to a stiff hill which we

had to climb, and unfortunately, besides being hilly, the road was both rough and stony, so that we dismounted to ease the horses. Indeed, we generally walked most of the hills, whether steep or not, for the pleasure of the thing. Reaching the top of a long rise, we had as long and as steep a descent on the other side; but as a compensation for the roughness of our way, we had a glorious view right and left over a wooded valley, with the winding Wye wandering in and out of it, in a manner that I believe only the Wye can wind, and right in front of us, a fir-clad hill rose up grandly. The scenery had ceased to be only beautiful, it was romantic now as well.

At the bottom of the descent we crossed the Wye on a fine old stone bridge of many arches (here we had to pay a not ruinous toll of sixpence; it was the first we had experienced since leaving home), and then we found ourselves in the out-of-the-world and romantically situated village of Bredwardine. At this spot it was our good fortune to come upon an old-fashioned hostelry, a typical country inn of the coaching days, unaltered and unimproved. The much-weathered signboard of this proclaimed it to be the Red Lion. We noted with pleasure, and make mention of the fact because of its rarity, that all the bedroom windows of this ancient hostel were wide open; for we have observed that country people as a rule keep their windows religiously shut, on the principle, I suppose, that as they get so much fresh air outside they like a change inside.

At the Red Lion at Bredwardine we fared simply, but well; indeed, I cannot call to mind that we ever fared badly anywhere beneath the familiar sign of the old Red Lion, so that it is a very favourite one of ours. Very pleasant was the cool sitting-room that we were shown into; the fare, as I have said, was good, the ale excellent. May we never taste worse! I am quite aware that as good ale may be had in London any day as in these rural inns, but somehow to me it never seems so good. Our surroundings have a good deal to do with our appreciation of things.

Bredwardine is a pretty village, charmingly situated at the foot of wooded hills and near the Wye-side. As our horses had done a long morning's stage, and as there was so much of beauty and interest around, we determined to make a long mid-day halt there; and so, armed with sketch-books and camera, we set out in search of the picturesque.

First we explored a glen at the back of our inn that led into the heart of the hills; and a very pretty glen it is, enlivened with a little stream which is crossed here and there by picturesque foot-bridges. Then we wended our way towards the church, for it seemed to us that there should be a good view from thence. The view, however, was not so good as we had expected; but to make amends for this, the church was, for a country church, of unusual interest. On the north side of it, over a built-up Norman doorway, we found some curious sculptures in stone. There was a man represented

THE WYE FROM ABOVE BREDWARDINE



as having the head of an elephant in place of a human one, and another man with his hands up to his face as though he had a dreadful toothache. These mysterious figures were puzzling, we could make no meaning out of them. Somehow, I can hardly say why, they suggested Oriental work to us. Doubtless they have some special signification, for they have manifestly been carved with much skill and pains. In the walls we also observed some "herring-bone" masonry, a style of building not infrequent in Norman castles, but I believe rare in churches, and showing the great age of this part of the structure.

Within the church, the tower, which is in the middle of the north wall, curiously and most inconveniently projects into the body of the nave, narrowing it right in the centre and spoiling all symmetry. The reason for this it is difficult to conjecture. On either side of the communion-table (or altar, is it now?) are two recumbent effigies of knights, the worse for ill-treatment: one is in alabaster, the other in stone; both are now without inscriptions.

Just as we were leaving the church we came upon a clergyman who proved to be the rector of the parish, a genial man, as most rectors are. We introduced ourselves, and asked him if he could in any way enlighten us as to the purport of the strange figures that we had observed over the doorway. But it appeared that these were just as much a puzzle to him as to us; he said, moreover, that they had perplexed certain learned antiquaries

who had been to inspect them. The enigma in stone therefore remains to be solved. A wild guess was made by one of the antiquaries that the figures represent some Chinese gods, and were copied from an engraved ring or other similar article by the original sculptor without any other idea than that of ornamentation. This guess struck us as not even having the merit of plausibility, for if there is one thing more certain than another about medieval carvings, even when most grotesque, it is that they always have a meaning, though often-times, it must be confessed, obscure to the casual observer. At St. Davids Cathedral we shall come upon some jokes carved in wood, and stones that have tales to tell.

As to the effigies, the rector informed us that the stone one was supposed to represent a "Baskerville," and that the one in alabaster was supposed to commemorate Sir Roger Vaughan of Bredwardine, who fell fighting at the battle of Agincourt. Learning that we were strangers in those parts and on a driving tour, the rector most good-naturedly offered to point out to us one or two things of interest that otherwise we might have missed. It was always so during the whole of our most delightful outing, as I have already remarked, everybody we came across seemed most anxious to be of service to us; from the day we started to the day we returned home we received nothing but unvarying kindness from all we met or spoke to. England from the box-seat and England from the rail are very different. Now here was another instance

of this : the rector would walk back with us to his garden (for when we met him he was going from home) to show us the view of the Wye from there ; and a very charming view it was, so charming that we both sketched and photographed it. Then he took us to a great mound above the river, the site of the ancient castle of Bredwardine. This is now all grass-grown, with here and there a mere fragment of a mouldering wall appearing above the sward. There are, we learnt, some dungeons and darksome passages underground ; the entrance to these being, however, now completely overgrown with tangled briars and other plants. An aged inhabitant of the village whom the rector buried in 1883 said that he remembered, when a boy, exploring them for some distance.

Learning that we were quite strangers in those parts, our good-natured guide strongly recommended us to climb to the summit of the hill at the back of Bredwardine in order to see a large cromlech, known locally, though why we could not discover, as King Arthur's Stone. At this spot, he told us, Charles I. once stopped and lunched when in these parts ; we learnt, moreover, that it commanded a magnificent panoramic view over the Wye valley. But we were not to be tempted either by antiquarian interest or historical association, and as for panoramas of scenery, we had almost had our fill of these of late. The truth is, we did not feel inclined for climbing just then. The day was hot, and the hill looked steep, so we stayed where we were ! Our outing was purely a pleasure one, we felt in no way

bound to see everything there was to be seen *en route*, less still to heed the dictations of the guide-books as to what we ought "to do." In fine, we had no idea of making a business of a holiday jaunt. The journey was not taken with the set purpose of writing a book, though I do not think that we missed much of any real interest on our way. Even had we so desired it, we could not very well have spared the time needful to reach King Arthur's Stone without spending the night at Bredwardine, as the day was growing old and the spare room at the Red Lion was engaged by a fisherman, or an artist, I forgot which now.

On leaving Bredwardine, we were informed by the boy-ostler that our road forward to Hay was a good one with a few "pitches." We know now what west country "pitches" are. They may be anything from a gentle rise to a stiff climb of over a mile, with like descents. Those we had to encounter that day were of the latter kind. It may also be worth noting that "a level road" in these parts does not necessarily mean a flat one, indeed it may be all up and down, but level as to *surface*.

At first our way took us along the foot of wooded hills, winding in and out of their projecting slopes. In their deep recesses we passed many a little tree-shaded glen made musical by the sound of falling water. The steep hillsides were dotted here and there by gray stone cottages, that had rough foot-paths leading up to them from below. The country began to look Welsh-like, nature put on a wilder visage, fields gave way now to rough mountain

pastures, land here was not cultivated to the last square yard, in place of quiet brooks we had impetuous rocky streams,—the character of the scenery was completely changed.

At one spot we came to a glen larger than the rest, down which the waters from the hills above foamed and tumbled along their boulder-strewn bed. This glen looked so romantic that we could not resist the temptation to pull up for a while to explore it, and well were we rewarded for our venture. Descending the rocky ravine, we discovered a picturesque old water-mill with its gray-green wheel droning as it slowly turned round and round. Wandering on, a succession of ready-made pictures met our gaze. Here was a wooden foot-bridge just where an artist would have placed it, there a shallow ford, lower down a tree-fringed pond held a supply of water for another older and even more picturesque mill. We wanted to make ever so many sketches here, but in reality made none, so embarrassed were we with the many good subjects; the difficulty was which to select. A painter might work a year in that glen and not exhaust it. I know just such another one in North Wales, and an artist I met there confided to me that he had taken "many a forty pound out of it," meaning in pictures he had sold for that sum.

From this spot commenced a long and heavy pull up hill of more than a mile. It was a pretty severe "pitch," but at last it came to an end, and as a reward for our climb I must confess that from the highest point we reached we had a glorious all-

round view. To the left we looked down the romantic Golden Valley, along which, I am sorry to say, we observed a railway in the course of construction. This will effectually open it up to the miner and cheap tripper, and destroy its hill-girt quietude. This remote vale is thus briefly described in my road-book : "A luxuriant and highly beautiful dale, watered by the river Dore, extending for about ten miles."

It was late that evening when we arrived at Hay, just over the Welsh border, a picturesque little town of crooked streets and quaint old houses pleasantly situated on the Wye. Fortunately the small inn there managed to accommodate us, otherwise we should have been in a fix, as it was getting dark, and our horses were tired with their long and heavy day's work. In the coffee-room we found a few pleasant people, like ourselves on tour, and we spent a very agreeable evening in their company chatting about many things, and of the neighbouring country and scenery in particular. Far better this than sitting around in chilly silence as English people at hotels mostly do. Once break the ice and what a "jolly" companion John Bull can become. Even it may be, as it has sometimes happened to us, that you are thrown in the company of famous men at these little remote country inns. We have met in such places popular authors, well-known artists—(and artists not famed),—architects of note, and one very eminent engineer, besides "a real live lord," all of whom we found most interesting to talk with, some specially so : generally, however, it was

not till after our conversation that we knew who our pleasant companions were. We have met also, let me honestly confess, but *at very rare intervals*, people who have been the reverse of agreeable when spoken to; then we have left them to their own sufficient company, and amused ourselves by writing up our journal, finishing off some sketches, or by taking a quiet evening walk. During this journey we did not come upon a single one of these depressing specimens of humanity; the friendly atmosphere and homelike environments of rural inns, luckily, do not seem to agree with them. The road is like the hunting-field, a great leveller and begetter of sociability.

Amongst the ancient buildings of Hay, the castle, which has had a stormy history, is the most interesting. Of this only a ruined ivy-grown tower (doubtless the keep) and gateway remain. The large Tudor house now known as the castle, which was built many years ago out of the materials of the old stronghold, and adjoins the crumbling tower, is a very picturesque structure, and looks almost as gray and worn as the original castle walls. To pull down a feudal castle to build a residence would now rightly be deemed a Goth-like act; but somehow when such a thing has been done centuries ago, and the more recent building is picturesque and has too earned a history, the act does not seem quite so reprehensible, but for all not to be defended.

On consulting our maps next morning, we decided to drive on to Brecon, a comparatively short and easy day's stage of fifteen miles. Still

the weather favoured us, for though there was a good supply of clouds overhead, and a south-west wind was blowing, it did not rain. It must have been a market-day at Hay, for we met on the road as we drove out of the town a number of Welsh women on horse and pony back laden with baskets of eggs, fowls, fruit, etc. Very picturesque and quaint it was to see these worthy folk jogging contentedly along with their commodities for sale. Most of them had red shawls on, sun-faded and weather-toned to a soft pleasant hue, and all I, think, wore hats. They every one bade us good-day as we drove along, for the Welsh people are invariably civil. Taffy is one of Nature's gentlemen, an excellent fellow if you understand him aright; he is courteous, peaceful, hard-working, and honest, excepting that he does not see the deadly sin of poaching for fish, nor does he love paying tithes, but these are his worst faults, and his virtues are many. Some people think differently of Taffy I know, but I speak of him as I have found him, and I quite agree with *Punch* that

If Taffy rides to my house,
Or unto Pat's doth swim,
I think my Taffy will remark
That we might learn of him.

If all Victoria's subjects
Were half as good as thou,
Victoria's subjects would kick up
Uncommon little row.

We had high bare hills on our left soon after leaving Hay; these we learnt from our map to be a

portion of the Black Mountains, the highest point of which, we gathered from the same authority, to be 2630 feet. Some of the peaks belonging to this range have curious names, one we noticed was given as Lord Hereford's Nob. This is marked on the map as being 2200 feet high.

The low-lying clouds, wind-driven along the wild hill-tops, effectually hid their outline, but the effect was very fine. As we could not see the mountain summits, we could imagine they were any height; they might have been snow-clad Alps for all that we could tell. The wandering mists gave an indefinable mystery to the mountain-scape, a charm not to be conveyed in words. We would not willingly have changed that day of cloud and gloom and gale for the sunniest of summer skies and balmiest of breezes. It was a grand and impressive sight to see the great gray masses of aqueous vapours sweeping along the rugged mountain summits, and darkening into a purple-gray the barren slopes below. It was a fitting welcome to wild Wales.

The first village we came to was Glasbury, a pretty spot from which there is a grand view of a lovely reach of the Wye, with the modern medieval castle of Maesllwch on its banks, or, as a guide-book we glanced into at our hotel had it, "a fine specimen of Norman architecture built in 1829"; almost as appropriate, it struck us, as saying, "a fine specimen of a railway viaduct erected in 1100." If the compiler of that little handbook should by any chance read this, I hope he will see the point.

At Glasbury, by the side of the highway, stands the Three Cocks, a hostelry that was well known to travellers in the old days. It now flourishes as a comfortable anglers' inn, and, apparently, has undergone but little change in spite of the changeful times. Fishermen (long life to them!), and artists in a lesser degree, have by their patronage saved and maintained in mountainous districts many an ancient coaching house that, owing to its lonely situation, would inevitably otherwise have closed its doors for want of custom; and these remote inns are about the most delightful resting-places for the traveller in search of beauty and true quiet that can be imagined or desired.

Leaving Glasbury, our road descended to an old stone bridge, with wide angular recesses at the sides for the benefit of foot-passengers. This crossed a brawling stream that gambolled and gurgled over its rocky bed on its fretful way from its mountain home to join the placid Wye. One of the chief attractions of a mountain land to me, is its rocky rivers with their tumbling, foaming, splashing waters, swirling and whirling amongst the boulders that check their impetuous course; and in Wales, both north and south, these rivers are crossed by old stone bridges, often ivy-clad, sometimes consisting of one bold arch, sometimes of a ruder and more picturesque type, being of piers built of rough unhewn stone, with flat slabs laid across them on the top, and having simply a hand-rail on either side. These primitive and charmingly picturesque bridges are very charac-

teristic of Wales, and always delight the eye of a landscape-painter. And equally delightful to him are the old time-worn and weather-tinted mills that are so frequently to be found on the banks of these streams, pictures in stone every one of them! An ancient water-mill or windmill is always a most tempting subject for the brush, and affords excellent material for the camera.

After a time our road began gradually to ascend, and eventually led us upon high ground; and how light and pure the air seemed on those bracing breezy uplands, how we expanded our lungs with the deep breaths of it we took in! It was a sort of natural champagne that invigorated and enlivened us, only without any other effect than that of raising our spirits and putting a fresh energy into our bodies. We felt it a privilege simply to exist and breathe the lithesome air; the finest tonic in the world for the jaded body, so exhilarating and life-giving.

Great patches of deep blue sky now began to show amongst the clouds above, and bright gleams of sunshine came and went. How wonderfully the light brought the colour of all things out, as a gleam rested on a bank of purple heather, on a mass of golden gorse, or a bed of red and yellow bracken! How full of colour was all around, what a deep pure blue was the circling distance of moors and hills, how richly tinted were the rocks, with their splashes of silvery-gray and bronzed lichen, how refreshing was the cool green of the grass, how rich the red of the trunks of the fir-trees, and the many hardy wild flowers how gay were they!

Nature is prodigal of her colour when it pleases her; she gives miles and miles of the purest ultramarine in her distances, purer and deeper than any that can be bought at a guinea an ounce. And yet there are some people who aver that England is a sombre land, and that we must go abroad for colour! Yet I neither know nor can imagine anything more gorgeous than one of our own hill-sides clothed with the heather and gorse in bloom, when the sun shines thereon; it is in truth a perfect miracle of colour, not to be matched with the brightest (and, alas! most fleeting) pigments we possess.

After a time our elevated road began to descend, and a glorious downhill run of about two miles we had all the way into the romantically situated, but in itself unattractive, town of Brecon. As we descended, grand views opened out before us, a mingling of mountain peak and rounded hill; of rocky cliff and winding river; of wooded vale and barren moor. A revelation of scenery as beautiful as an artist's dream; a rare and happy combination of rock, river, wood, and hill, more refreshing to gaze upon than any painted picture.

The last half-mile of our descent was rather steep. This led us alongside of a deep and densely wooded glen, down which we could hear a mountain stream making wild music as it splashed from steep to steep, and foamed and churned along its stony bed. Now and again through the thick foliage we could just catch a peep of the glancing water, and the sparkle of a fall; and more than once we

caught sight of a pretty rustic wooden bridge that spanned the narrow rushing stream. Surely there are few things in nature more beautiful than a Welsh glen!

Just at the top of this last descent the Brecon Beacons came well into view. As we were high up in the world, so our horizon was high before us, therefore we had a comprehensive view of these finely-shaped mountain peaks that rise so grandly and gracefully from the valley below. Why Snowdon and Cader Idris should be so famous and tourist-haunted, and the Brecon Beacons (the highest mountains in South Wales) so comparatively little known or visited, seems strange to me. But I suppose that there is a fashion in scenery as in all other things.

It cannot be on account of height, for Pen-y-Fan, the chief of the Brecon Beacons, is 2910 feet above the sea-level, and therefore not much inferior in this respect to Cader Idris, which is 2954 feet in height. The difference is insignificant. And as for form (and form has a great deal to do with the impressiveness of a mountain), the Brecon Beacons have a special dignity and grandeur of their own. Moreover, they possess the no small advantage of standing alone; no neighbouring height competes with them. The tourist in search of "fresh woods and pastures new," or rather "mountains new," might do much worse—I had almost written could not do better—than to take up his quarters at Brecon, where there is an exceedingly comfortable inn, and explore the lovely country around. Besides

the Beacons to climb, there are other lesser hills, and the walks about are charmingly varied and replete with interest; moreover, the fishing in the Usk and local streams, we were told, is good. That there are fish in the waters around I can aver, for I saw a man catch a trout in the Usk fully four inches long from head to tail, though to be perfectly honest, I must confess that it was the only one I saw him catch during about an hour's time. But we all know the proverb: "A watched kettle never boils," and it seems to me that a watched angler hardly ever catches fish. That, at least, is my impression, and I have watched not a few. For myself, I must candidly own that it does not seem to make any difference whether I am watched or not when trouting; the result is much the same.

Indeed, when I do indulge in the "gentle craft," I regret to say that, except for the look of the thing, a creel is of but little service to me; and as to a landing-net—well, I should much like, just for once, to hook or even feel a fish that needed one. There is certainly this advantage in sketching from nature, as an excuse to take you in fresh air and amongst beautiful scenery, that you are sure of bringing back home something with you. When you go a-fishing, or at least when I go, there is no certainty whatever about the matter. Whilst on the subject of angling, I came across the following rhyme which I copied from a visitors' book at one of the inns on the road. This I give here, in case it may interest some of my readers, though of course I cannot accept any responsibility for the correctness

BRECON BEACONS



of the sentiments expressed, nor do I even know whether it is original or not, being but little versed in angling lore.

When the wind is in the north,
In vain the fisherman goes forth ;
When the wind is in the south,
It blows the bait in the fish's mouth :
When the wind is in the east,
The fishes bite the least ;
When the wind is in the west,
The fishes bite the best.

We all know how astonishingly the size of a fish grows in the after-dinner chat or over the evening pipe of anglers. At one of the country inns we stayed at, the landlord thereof, who was a bit of a wag, thus expressed, in all good-nature and with a very meaning smile, his opinion of this natural weakness of a fisherman's nature :—"Sportsmen, sir," said he, "are all liars, but fishermen are d—— liars." This same landlord also used the term "an angler's tale" as equivalent to a bit of exaggeration. Well, I can readily pardon the angler for his little harmless weakness; it hurts no one, for due allowance is always made by his listeners, and it pleases him. Never yet have I met an angler who was not a genial man, and the best of company; and I wish all the fraternity a light heart and a heavy creel when next they go a-fishing.

CHAPTER X

Brecon Castle—The company at our inn—Llanspyddyd—Welsh names—A dearth of vowels—The Usk valley—A round church tower—Senny—The Carmarthen Van—Trecastle—A lovely glen—A mail-coach dashed over a precipice—Llandovery—Nature's playgrounds—The Black Mountains—Llandilo—Building *versus* construction.

REACHING Brecon, we drove up to the old Castle Inn, once an important coaching house, where we found excellent quarters for ourselves and capital stabling for our horses. It chanced that a county ball was to be held there that night, but the thoughtful landlady, mindful of the comforts of her guests, placed us in a room as far removed from the dancers as possible, and owing to the fact that the Castle is a roomy and rambling house, we managed to rest undisturbed; indeed, the faint sound of the music that came to us ever and again was so softened and subdued, that it rather lulled us to sleep than otherwise.

A very pleasant inn is the Castle at Brecon, one after our own heart, comfortable but not showy, with its sunny coffee-room opening on to a shady garden, in which you may smoke your pipe at ease and admire at the same time the beautiful view of the Usk valley and river and the grand outlines

of the Brecon Beacons. How delightful is an English garden in the summer-time; and when it commands such a prospect as this one, doubly delightful. This inn truly stands on an enviable position. It is indeed built on a part of the commanding site of the old castle, and abuts on an ivy-overgrown ruined tower, all that now remains of the ancient stronghold except some crumbling walls of slight extent. Tradition has it, as usual of course, that Cromwell battered down and dismantled the castle; but matter-of-fact history gives a rather more prosaic account of its destruction, the truth being that it was pulled down purposely by the inhabitants of the town during the Civil Wars to prevent a siege, and to avoid the possibility of their being saddled with the maintenance of a garrison. And perhaps, having this in view, the inhabitants acted wisely according to their lights; but it is a great pity that the interesting structure should have been so effectually destroyed.

I may here mention the fact, though we were not aware of it till we saw it mentioned in a local guide-book, that Mrs. Siddons the famous actress was born at Brecon on the 14th of July 1755, at the old Shoulder of Mutton Inn, now called the Siddons Vaults.

We found a very pleasant and entertaining company gathered in the coffee-room that evening. There were two amateur photographers, with whom we had an interesting conversation. They agreed with us as to the picturesqueness of the country around, and said that they had found no end of

charming subjects for their cameras. As a head-quarter for a landscape photographer they considered that Brecon was hard to beat. And my experience is, that where a photographer can find a picture, limited as he is to the mechanical production of an unfeeling lens, an artist can find a hundred. Often and often an otherwise most excellent photographic subject is ruined by a bit of ugly wall, the intruding corner of a building, a tree that will not come happily in the composition, a commonplace cottage, and the like. These the more fortunate artist can conveniently ignore. The too-faithful lens knows nothing of selection ; it reproduces everything in front of it, beautiful or the reverse. One of the best negatives I possess is spoilt artistically by some hideous telegraph lines stretching right in front of some quaint Sussex cottages. Strangely enough, I did not notice these when focusing the picture, but they come out all too plainly on the prints.

Rather late in the evening an American gentleman made his appearance in the coffee-room and ordered some supper. It struck us for the moment as somewhat singular that an American should have found his way to this remote corner of Great Britain. Brecon is not, I believe, as much as mentioned in the usual handbooks published for the purpose of informing our Transatlantic cousins where they should go and what they should see in the Old Country. However, there he was, a reality, and evidently in want of refreshment. Having rung the bell, he asked the waitress to bring him in some supper, "Right away, anything you've got, for I'm

mighty hungry, I guess ; and look here, let's have a bottle of champagne with it." Presently the table was spread with some cold roast beef, sweets, and cheese. But this was not altogether satisfactory to the hungry American, though right enough for a less particular "Britisher." "Now look here," said he in a comical put-on aggrieved tone of voice, so good-naturedly aggrieved (if there be such a thing) that no one could take offence at it,—"now look here, I don't want cold beef. You've got a ball supper on, haven't you? Well then, I guess there's some fixings about. Suppose now there's some cold fowl or turkey. Eh? Girl alive, bring us some fowl. I ain't particular." This last expression amused us considerably, remembering the disdain with which he looked upon the cold beef. The girl, however, said that she could not possibly get anything from the ball supper, and eventually our American had to be satisfied with chops ; and I do not think that he did so badly after all, especially considering his late arrival.

Supper and a bottle of champagne finished, the American turned his attention to us, and we were soon in the midst of an animated conversation. By the way, he did fully three-fourths of the talking. Americans are never, I think, quite happy unless they are chatting with some one (if on business, so much the better, for business is their pleasure). They have none of that stand-offishness, none of that uncomfortable uneasy stiffness that strange Britons have one to another when they meet during travel. No ; Americans are essentially companionable, and

good company. As becomes staunch republicans, they feel that no one is either above or beneath them, and so they see no harm in conversing with any strangers they may come across. They judge of a gentleman by his actions and demeanour, they esteem him for his own worth, not for his family connections,—

Here and there a cottar's babe is royal-born by right divine ;
Here and there my lord is lower than his oxen or his swine.

An American is an Englishman in pluck, energy, and spirit, with the vivacity of a Frenchman,—not an unhappy combination of qualities. Our friend that evening was very communicative, and entertained us with an account of how he had made his fortune, which almost sounded like a romance, yet too strange not to be true. He related to us (not with shame, that he had risen from nothing, but with manifest honest pride) how he had landed in New York a poor boy, without even the proverbial last shilling in his pocket, and now he did not know exactly what he was worth, but somewhere about a million of dollars. "See," said he, "I'm proud of my ascent ; you people over here are proud of your descent. That's just about it, sir-ee. Guess we'll have a drink together ; and if ever you're in Dash city, State of California, wall, I'll be mighty glad to see yer. That's so."

Out of Brecon, after crossing the Usk on a fine stone bridge, we had a stretch of fairly level road for about two miles to the little village of Llan-

spyddyd, with its gray, old, yew-surrounded church, which looked gloomy even on that bright sunny day. The dark yews were proof against the cheerful influence of the brilliant sunshine. The name of the place reminded us that Welsh names are difficult for a strange Saxon to pronounce aright. This one, however, was comparatively child's play to many we came across farther on. Some, as Scwd or Cwm-y-dwr, are perplexing enough, but these are short; the longer titles are simply appalling. What, for instance, can one possibly make of Dwygfyldchi or Rhydyfri or Llwchwr? You may see places marked on your map, and yet be hopelessly unable to ask your way thereto, for no Welshman will understand your rendering of them. A certain doctor gave a friend of mine his special receipt for pronouncing Welsh names. Said he, "It's quite simple; you have only to take some consonants and gargle them!" The clever author of the ever-charming *Ingoldsby Legends*, in "Patty Morgan, the Milkmaid's Story," thus amusingly alludes to the matter—

Not far from his dwelling, from the vale proudly swelling,
Rose a mountain; its name you'll excuse me from telling,
For the vowels made use of in Welsh are so few
That the A and the E, the I, O, and the U,
Have really but little or nothing to do;
And the duty, of course, falls the heavier by far,
On the L, and the H, and the N, and the R.
Its first syllable, "Pen," is pronounceable: then
Come two L Ls, and two H Hs, two F Fs, and an N;
About half a score Rs, and some Ws follow,
Beating all my best efforts at euphony hollow.

Fortunately we were provided with excellent maps, and what is even more to the point, knew how to use them, otherwise we might, especially in the wilder mountain parts, have easily gone astray, for to ask our way we were unable. At Llandovery, where we rested the night, noting Llanwrtyd Wells inscribed on the map, and as our road-book remarked that it was a most romantically situated village amongst the mountains, we asked the landlord of our inn how it was pronounced, as we had some idea, if the road were decent, of driving there. He termed it "Thlan-rooted," and even seemed astonished at our ignorance in not knowing how to call it. "It's so easy," he remarked. Possibly, but we could not see it. Indeed, the names of many of the places we passed through struck us as so strange and unfamiliar, that we had all the feeling of travelling in a foreign land without leaving our own. We once even penetrated into a remote Welsh village in which we could not find a single person who could understand one word of English. It was a novel sensation, for in the most out-of-the-way places on the Continent I have not found the same difficulty in making myself understood; but I have not been in Russia. However, to-day our way led us up and along the lovely Usk valley, and then down the charming Gwdderig glen; and as we were on the old main highway from London to Carmarthen we could not well go wrong, for but few roads branched off it, and these were all manifestly but mountain tracks leading to hamlets, and doubtless

eventually losing themselves on the wild uplands beyond.

As we mounted out of Llanspyddyd we caught every now and again glorious peeps of the Usk flowing far below us between deep-set banks of many-tinted woods, and when we could not see the river for foliage or intervening cliffs, we could always hear it. Indeed, this beautiful land of Southern Wales is everywhere musical with the sound of running water. Now it is the wild roar of a torrent, now the restful gurgling and rippling of a shallow river, now the brawling of an impetuous mountain stream warring with the boulders that obstruct its path, now the thundering, downward dash of a deep fall, or it may be a mingled murmuring of distant streams. How companionable is a highland river, what wild music it makes as it splashes over rocks and foams over falls; how it entertains you with its wordless chatter, as it flows over pebbly pool and shallow reach; and how full of changeful aspects is it at almost every step. No one need be dull by the side of a mountain stream; above all, no landscape artist or fisherman.

In about another two miles we came to a desolate-looking little church close to the roadside. The tower of this edifice has the peculiarity of being round instead of square. In Norfolk and Suffolk, especially in the former county, round towers to churches are very general, so much so as to be quite a familiar feature in the landscape, but we imagined that this curious departure from

the usual form of church architecture was confined to those counties. Here, however, for the first time during our home travels, out of East Anglia, we came across another round church tower. On a tombstone in the churchyard, after the names of the deceased engraved thereon, we read the following strange inscription :—

I hope they are now in Heaven, in spite of Satan's face.

Then onward and upward still we went, past flanking hillsides, till at last we reached the little village of Senny, a scattered hamlet romantically situated at the junction of the Senny and the Usk. Our road was taken over the boulder-strewn bed of the Senny by a stone bridge, which was also crossed by a picturesque foot-bridge of wood opposite to a primitive inn. To the left, up a glen, down which the Senny finds its way from its bleak mountain home in the wilds of Y-Fangi-hirach, there are some busy sawmills,—a rather rare sight in England, though a common enough one in the United States and most new countries. The sound of the grinding of corn cannot be heard far away from a mill, but the peculiar sound of the sawing of timber can be heard a long way off.

Still following up the narrowing Usk, which was now nearing its source in the heart of the lone Carmarthen Van, a bare mountain 2631 feet high, that came grandly into view as we drove out of Senny, our road soon began to climb in real earnest, so we dismounted to ease our horses; indeed were not sorry of an excuse to stretch our

legs. Glancing down through an opening amongst the thick woods that clothe the steep hillside, we caught a glimpse of a grand old stone bridge that with one great arch boldly spans the river here at perhaps its prettiest part. The gray bridge, with the tree-fringed banks on either side, the tumbling river below, and the purple mountains beyond, made a most charming picture,—one very characteristic of Wales both North and South, but not less beautiful because so often to be met with in those lands of lovely scenery and lonely river glens.

On entering Trecastle, we met a troop of shaggy Welsh ponies being driven along to Brecon. We counted as many as forty-two, and we had actually to pull up to let them pass, for they took up all the road. At Trecastle we found a decent little inn, where, as Dr. Johnson remarked of a remote Scotch hostel, "of provisions, the negative catalogue was very copious." However, we managed to make a very satisfactory meal of bread and cheese and ale. The fare was simple, but it was good of its kind, and a change from the only other alternative, the everlasting ham and eggs. Moreover, we were honestly hungry, and we therefore thoroughly enjoyed our modest meal,—and what more could we have done had it been a costly repast prepared by a famous French *chef*, washed down by an expensive brand of champagne? A ten-miles drive over bracing Welsh uplands is provocative of a healthy appetite and a good digestion. Just outside the village is a beech-clad mound, surrounded by a dry moat, on which a castle once stood. Of its history but little

appears to be known. The one thing certain about it is that it has been very effectually demolished.

From Trecastle we had a glorious run of about nine miles to Llandovery, every inch of the road being downhill. About a mile out we passed the solitary hamlet of Llywell, its ancient church having a massive embattled tower that suggested a castle keep: indeed, in early times very possibly this tower may have served as a place of refuge for the comparatively peaceful inhabitants around, in case of sudden raids by the formidable bands of robbers that then infested the wild mountain districts,—just as some church towers on the Border were designed for defence, and served as a place of temporary safety when incursions by the wild Scotch clans were made in search of plunder.

Then, after driving through the romantic pass of Cwm-y-Dwr, we soon reached the head of the lovely Gwdderig valley, a narrow wooded ravine between the mountains, down which the little river Gwdderig tumbles with many a cascade. The beauty of this glen enchanted us; we were quite unprepared for anything of the kind. There is a great charm when driving across country in coming thus suddenly and unexpectedly upon such beauty-spots; and there is, moreover, a certain pleasurable feeling in the consciousness of having discovered them for oneself.

We drove down between high hills and fir-clad cliffs. By the river-side were old water-mills and picturesque cottages, and the splashing stream was crossed here and there by tiny bridges and stepping-stones. At one spot to our right we

noticed a chapel with a small graveyard around set on a crag above the road. As we descended through this romantic glen, every few yards revealed a fresh picture: it was a drive to be remembered. As we proceeded quietly along, drinking in the loveliness of the scene, our attention was suddenly arrested by a wayside monument, consisting of a granite obelisk enclosed by iron railings. This aroused our curiosity, for such things are rare. Pulling up to inspect this, we found by a lengthy inscription thereon that it was placed there to mark the spot where a terrible accident happened to the Carmarthen mail-coach in 1835. This inscription we copied, and is as follows:—

This Pillar is called
Mail Coach Pillar and erected
as a caution to Mail Coach
Drivers to keep from intoxication
and in memory of the Gloucester
& Carmarthen Mail Coach
which was driven by
Edward Jenkins on the 19 day of
December in the year 1835 who
was intoxicated at the time
Drove the mail on the wrong
side of the road and going at
full speed or gallop met a
cart and permitted the leaders
to turn short round to the right
hand and went down over the
precipice 121 feet where at the
Bottom near the river it came
against an ash tree when the
Coach was dashed into
Several Pieces.

Then comes a list of the passengers and the name of the guard. Strangely enough, though the coach was a total wreck and the horses were killed, none of the passengers were seriously hurt; a truly miraculous escape. We looked down the precipice, and shuddered to think what the feelings of the unfortunate travellers must have been as they took that fearful leap into space. How they escaped as they did, with their lives, we could not comprehend. A sketch of the pillar is given at the commencement of this book.

Leaving this ill-fated spot, the narrow glen gradually widened out, and by degrees we emerged into the more open pastoral valley of the Towy, which reminded us much of the more famous vale of the Conway. But where both are so beautiful contrasts are invidious.

Soon now we reached Llandovery, a little town uninteresting of itself, but enviably situated in the midst of great natural attractions. At the Castle Inn here we found excellent quarters, good fare, capital stables, a most obliging landlord and kind-hearted landlady; and what more could the most exacting traveller desire? This old hostelry must have been in the days of the coaches a house of considerable importance, for we learnt from the landlord that between seventy and eighty horses were kept there then; and all that I can say is, that if the travellers of those times fared as well as we, their latter-day followers, did, they had no cause to complain.

Close to the inn, on a steep rocky mound

overlooking the river, stand the picturesque ruins of the old castle, from which elevated position there is an extensive and comprehensive prospect of the peaceful Towy valley. After sketching this crumbling relic of the feudal days, we took a stroll down by the river-side, and a charming walk we had. Returning another way, we passed by an ancient church about a mile out of the town. Amongst the sad colony of graves here we noticed a plain but large stone monument to one "David Davies of this town, labourer." It struck us as strange that such a monument should be erected thus to a simple labourer, nor did the laconic inscription in any way enlighten us on the matter. As a rule, the poor labourer, whose tireless toil has made the wealth and beauty of the land, has to be content with merely a grass-grown nameless grave—not even a headstone marks the spot where he lies. It is just possible that this monument may have a history, but there was no one about from whom we could glean anything.

From Llandovery we drove down the Towy valley to Llandilo, passing through a lovely country of green meadows watered by many silvery streams. The rich pastoral landscape, with its English-looking farmsteads and hedgerowed fields, offered a great contrast with the wild country we had traversed the day before. The level road, too, was an agreeable change from the hilly one we had out of Brecon, and I trust that the horses appreciated the difference.

Here and there we passed some picturesque

cottages. Strangely enough, many of these were thatched, for slates are almost the universal roofing material in Wales. The thatched cottages and soft green country around were suggestive of southern lands. Had we been set down in the Towy valley suddenly, without knowing where it was, we should certainly have guessed that we were in fair Devonshire.

Two or three miles of pleasant road, shaded by overhanging trees, brought us to the pretty village of Llanwrda, situated at the foot of a charming glen that leads right up into the heart of the mountains. Down this glen, past banks of spruce and pine, a large stream tumbles and foams along in grand style. Our camera and sketch-books were called into requisition here, and we did not leave the romantic spot without adding to our ever-growing store of pictures. I wonder whether the poor cottagers appreciate scenery; if so, how much happier is the lot of those who live in beautiful mountain lands than that of their less fortunate brethren who dwell in flat and purely agricultural districts. And what a blessing for the cotter's children is the glorious playground the hills afford, the bracing air, and the pure water. They have somewhere to ramble and make merry in besides the dusty highway. There is no mowing grass or growing corn to prevent them wandering over the free and far-extending moors. It would be a great blessing, and would make the life of many a poor villager and his little ones brighter, if every hamlet could be provided with a bit of common

land for a recreation-ground,—some spot where the poor man might go and smoke his pipe and chat after his hard day's work is done, so that he need not be driven to the public-house as a change from the stuffy confinement of his humble and but too often uncomfortable and insanitary home. Some hamlets possess greens and some commons, but many, alas! possess neither. The only excitement the poor have in the majority of villages is the public-house on week-days, and the chapel on Sundays. Little wonder that men and women who lead such uneventful lives of toil welcome the Salvation Army. They naturally rejoice in anything that breaks upon the weary monotony of their lives. It is something for them to be cared for, to be sought after, to be sympathised with. Too long have they been left in the cold by the Church, and placed in out-of-the-way corners and draughty seats (when they go there, that is); and they are possibly getting a little tired of being ever told, as a compensation for their hard life of continual struggle, that things will be remedied in another world. They have more faith in present deeds than future promises, and would like some of the evils they suffer from remedied now. But I am digressing, and treading, moreover, on dangerous ground. But somehow (I know not exactly why) our thoughts wandered in this groove as we journeyed on,—for one has time to think as well as admire the scenery when driving across country; and mixing with all classes, and talking to all manner of people, as we did, we saw and

learnt much that gave us ample food for meditation. If some of our clever members of Parliament would take a lengthened driving tour, they might gather a good deal of valuable information as to the aspirations and ideas of the new body of electors that they could gain no other way. A little more knowledge of the people's real wants and a little less talking would at any rate do no harm. I merely throw out the hint.

As we drove away from Llanwrda, we had sloping fir-clad hills to our right, and on the other side of the valley the Black Mountains rose boldly before us in rugged outline,—fold beyond fold in endless succession; and on their highest summits rested softly-tinted clouds, whilst far away, hill and cloud were so blended in a mystery of blue haze, that we could scarcely make out which was land or sky. It was a beautiful sight to see the warm gleams of sunlight and the mighty masses of cloud-shadows raking the great mountain slopes. The colours of the hills were wonderful, and ever and again the sun, shining on their steep sides, revealed many a long silvery line of light, where streams were dashing down deep gullies. The special charm of this valley is its happy combination of barren hill and rolling moorland, with luxuriant woods and rich green pastures. I can only liken it to a bit of pastoral peaceful England set in the midst of wild Welsh mountains: beauty in the lap of grandeur.

Such lovely scenery made the miles seem short, so that we were quite surprised when we found

ourselves entering Llandilo, a stony, hard-featured looking town, in sharp contrast with the lovely, soft, and treeful country immediately around. As we drove up the long, hilly, uninteresting street of the place, for the first time this journey we had our misgivings as to finding suitable quarters. We looked to the right and left, but could see no likely inn. However, when we arrived at the other end of the town, just as we had begun to despair of finding one of any kind, the Cawdor Arms came into sight, and this proved after all to be one of the best hotels we had on the way. We had expected nothing, or very little, and yet here we were actually provided with the luxury of a dressing-room—and without extra charge. A driving tour abounds in surprises, mostly pleasant ones. Our usual good fortune had not deserted us; in fact, it is interesting to note how well we have fared and been entertained in remote out-of-the-way places, where one might have considered it a doubtful matter as to whether accommodation of any kind was to be had; for money will not make hotels in desert places.

After having successfully refreshed the inner man and seen after our horses' welfare, we proceeded to take a tour of inspection round the place. First we bent our footsteps towards the Towy, which here is crossed by a fine stone bridge of grand proportions, that with one mighty arch of masonry spans the river. A noble bit of building is this bridge, quite an achievement in its way, worthy of the ancient Romans. We gazed upon it impressed

with its beauty and boldness, its strength and gracefulness. The art of building is almost a lost one ; we construct now rather than build.

Our iron-girder bridges, of ugly form, our railway stations, our warehouses, and even our houses are constructed ; the builder proper is lost in the engineer. Iron takes the place of the more enduring stone ; it is cheaper and less beautiful ; it requires constant care or it will rust away ; and the cast metal may have hidden faults, that seriously weaken its upholding or sustaining power. Structures have been known to give way where buildings would have stood unharmed. The men of old built for all time : we construct for the present, cheaply and by contract. We have lost the regard for the built beauty of form and solid substance that is so grateful to the eye because it looks so strong. We are so accustomed to flimsy construction and the work of the jerry-builder that we have almost forgotten what good, sound, lasting building is. Why, I even know of some London mansions, let at high rentals, in which, by clauses in the leases, dances are not allowed, presumably because the floors of the said mansions are not of sufficient strength. It has been left for the nineteenth century to construct showy mansions whose floors will not bear a dance ! What would our forefathers have thought of such a home ?

On the outskirts of Llandilo is the beautifully timbered park of Dynevor. This contains a plain modern mansion, and the picturesque ruins of an ancient castle finely placed on the top of a wooded

DYNEVOR CASTLE



height overlooking the river. The ruined castle pleased us better than the modern mansion. From its commanding position it is a prominent and picturesque feature in the landscape around.

Whilst wandering in the park we noticed some carrier (homing, though, is the correct term, I believe) pigeons flying past. One thing about their flight we especially noticed: when they came to a large and thick clump of trees, they did not swerve to the right or left, but went straight through them, manifestly intent on making what the Americans would call an "air line" to their destination.

CHAPTER XI

A river issuing out of a mountain-side—Carreg Cennin—Dryslwyn Castle—A country of “Llans”—An enterprising dealer—A lotus-eating land—Merlin’s’ Cave—Traditions—Carmarthen—Coracles—Hobb’s Point—A regular puzzle—The “Pass By”—A challenge—A mid-day halt—In luck’s way—A rare thing in Wales—An angler’s haunt—Haverfordwest—An anecdote of Turner—Sketching from nature—The ideal and the real.

FROM Llandilo we made a short detour to Carreg Cennin Castle and to the source of the river Llwchwr (of unpronounceable name), both spots of much interest and well worth a visit, but being out of the beaten track they are seldom seen by the tourist. At first our road (which was plainly shown on our map) led us up and along a beautiful valley, with a dashing little river for company. After a time we had to leave this for a hilly by-road that led us right into the heart of the mountains and entailed some stiff climbing. Soon now we reached Pont Trap, a delightfully secluded and tree-shaded spot where two noisy mountain streams meet by an old stone bridge and a gray weather-toned mill. Here we discovered a primitive clean country inn, where we put up our horses and obtained a cool, refreshing glass of ale, which we greatly relished, for the day was hot, and mortal beings are sometimes thirsty.

From this sequestered spot we proceeded on foot over a wide boulder-strewn and wind-swept moorland in search of the romantic source of the Llwchwr, where the river of that name issues from a cavern right out of the mountain-side; and well were we rewarded for the rough scramble that we had to reach it.

At a lonely farmhouse on the moor we called a halt to ask the way, and were offered a glass of milk; but as ale and milk, however excellent in themselves separately, do not agree well together, we endeavoured to excuse ourselves from accepting the kind-hearted farmer's hospitality; but he would hear of no refusal, and so not to wound the good man's feelings we drank the milk and risked the consequences, and for some time afterwards felt as though we carried a solid Dutch cheese about with us. "It's a fine country round about," we remarked to the farmer. "Well," replied he, "it's a very fine country indeed in the summer-time, but in the winter it's not so fine indeed." We ventured to state that the climate appeared to agree with him, for he looked the picture of health. "Oh yes," he said, "we're all strong up here; only strong people can live, the winter kills the weak ones off."

Learning that we might have some difficulty in finding the spot we were in search of, we gladly accepted the offer of a man to act as a guide. Though after all the difficulty was small, for having struck the river we had of course merely to follow it up to reach its source. However, we learnt something from our guide (there are few people

from whom you cannot learn something), who told us that his father had explored the curious cavern for over a mile, taking with him a pound of candles and several balls of string, which he unravelled as he proceeded, so that he might be enabled to trace his way back by it. We too were tempted to try a little exploring, in ever so mild a way, for we had neither candles nor string, only some wax matches. But we found the entrance to the cavern so narrow, wet, and the proceeding so generally uncomfortable and unprofitable, that we very soon gave up all idea of any underground groping. Caverns, after all, are more or less similar to one another, only varying in size. They are all equally dark, and the degree of discomfort in exploring them varies only as you are able to crawl or walk upright without bumping your head, or getting your feet wet through. I except, of course, all regular show caverns with ready-made gravel walks, and even sometimes, as at Buxton and Matlock, with gas laid on! So we contented ourselves with merely making a sketch of this singular and interesting spot, showing the clear, cool stream issuing out of the hollow rock. I know of no river that has so romantic a birth-place.

Descending to the bottom of the deep ravine that separates the source of the Llwchwr from Carreg Cennin Castle, we had a fine view of the latter, grandly perched on the top of an isolated and inaccessible crag. This old ruined stronghold, that boldly crowns a perpendicular precipice of about five hundred feet in sheer height, is just the

sort of a castle that a child pictures to himself such a building should be. It is the ideal castle of story-books realised. From below, one has to look right up to it, and even to crane one's neck to do so. Were this romantically-placed ruin only abroad—say on the renowned Rhine—how famous it would be; how it would be extolled in song, how pictured in prose, how consecrated in painting! yes, and how it would be photographed, and how sentimental matter-of-fact Britons would become over it. But “a prophet has no honour in his own country.”

Having made a sketch of the gray crag and frowning castle, we set off to climb up to the ruins, crossing on our way by a picturesque wooden foot-bridge a little chattering stream that flows past the foot of the stern precipice. From this point the castle seems almost inaccessible, indeed it can only be approached from one side, and even on this we found the grass slopes to be both steep and slippery.

It was getting late in the afternoon and the shadows had begun to lengthen when at last we reached the summit of the crag. The view from this lofty spot is very fine, and in one direction of vast extent. To the west the eye ranges far, far away over swelling hill and shady dale, over gloomy wood and gleaming river, till lost in the uncertain distance; to the north, south, and east, over spacious solitudes of undulating moors and barren mountains.

Entering the castle, we found ourselves in a desolate weed and grass grown courtyard; the walls around were dark and bare; there was a sort of ghostly gloom, an indescribably forbidding look

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about the stern unlovely ruins, that was impressive. To increase the dismal effect of the place upon us, the wind suddenly rose, and came and went in great gusts, making weird southing sounds as it swept through the broken loopholes and hidden passages. As we stood there, a depressing sense of solitude and remoteness stole over us,—an eerie feeling as though there were an evil genius haunting the grim and battered stronghold. But enough, I am becoming sentimental.

The castle within is a mere shell, and we found little to interest us excepting a curious winding passage, partly built out on the face of the precipice and partly hollowed out of the rock. This passage (dimly lighted at first by narrow slits in the wall, but dark farther down where cut out of the solid rock) descends a long way by a series of steps to a well—intended, we presumed, to supply the garrison with water. And a rather precarious supply it must have been; for as a chain is not stronger than its weakest link, this lack of a necessary commodity must have been a source of weakness to the castle. In this respect a fortress surrounded by a moat had a special advantage, and was in reality more defensible, though it might not appeal so much to the imagination as one set boldly on a height.

It was both late and dark when we got back to Llandilo, somewhat tired with our long day's wanderings and scramblings, but greatly pleased with our exploration of this remote and little-visited corner of Wales.

We were up early the next morning and resumed

our journey betimes, bound for Carmarthen. Skirting the well-wooded park of Dynevor, we had for a while an undulating road that led us through a pretty pastoral country, with here and there a picturesque old stone-built farmstead; a country that might have been a part of the English Midlands but for the distant mountains. About five miles on our way we came to a spot from whence we obtained a good view of Dryslwyn Castle, standing on a bold, bare, scarped hill, overlooking the valley and commanding the river. This castle sustained a siege in the reign of Edward I., when Lord Stafford and other officers of the besieging forces were buried beneath the ruins of one of its towers which they had undermined. Fine and even striking though the position of Dryslwyn Castle be, it will not compare in this respect with Carreg Cennin.

Driving on, we passed several by-lanes and bridle-tracks. Strangely enough, most of these were provided with finger-posts; and, according to the names inscribed thereon, these by-ways all led, without, I think, exception, to places beginning with "Llan." Amongst the number of Llans we got quite confused. Llan we found, from a glossary of Welsh words, to mean "a village with a church"; hence, doubtless, the frequency of this common prefix.

At one point on our road we crossed the Cothi by a fine old stone bridge. The shallow river, with its pebbly bed, its quiet pools in which lazy cattle were cooling themselves beneath the shade of over-hanging trees, formed a very pretty picture; and

the wooded glen, down which the river makes its way from the wild moors above, suggested pleasant wandering both for angler and artist, though possibly the stream is too small for big trout. But where his surroundings are so beautiful the sportsman is compensated somewhat for the size of the fish. Indeed, the special charm of an angler's holiday and a landscape artist's life is the delightful scenery it takes them amongst.

Shortly after this we came to a wayside hostel, which, from a lengthy inscription on its signboard, appeared to be, besides an inn, a country store where almost everything in reason was to be had, for this is how the notice ran :—

Salutation Inn
By Jones
Draper . . . Grocer
Ironmonger
General Dealer in Flour & Corn
Seeds &c.
Earthenware . . . Chinaware
Galvanized Wares
Holloware
Licensed to sell Tobacco.

It struck us that this Mr. Jones was of an enterprising turn of mind to set up such a store in a remote country place.

We noticed at most of the cottage doors we passed Welshwomen sitting busily knitting. All wore caps, and nearly every one of them, with characteristic courtesy, looked up to wish us a civil good-day as we sped by. At some of the poorer dwellings we noticed that fowls went in and out

as though quite at home, and we wondered to ourselves whether the fowl was the "gentleman who paid the rent" of the small Welsh crofter.

A long pull uphill now brought us on to high ground, from which we obtained another and fresh view of the charming Towy valley, with its many-tinted woods, its green fields, and meandering silvery river, backed by long ridges of purple hills. It was a dream of loveliness. When will artists discover the beauties of South Wales? Its glen and river scenery is every whit as picturesque as that of the more famed "North Country," whilst the softer southern climate enhances the colour and makes richer the foliage.

Driving on past fir-clad cliffs, and through shady woods that clothed the sloping sides of the hills, we presently reached a secluded and somewhat somnolent village of whitewashed houses (some even had their roofs whitewashed too). This gave the place a very clean, if rather a glaring, appearance. Here was one of those delightfully picturesque old mills that are so dear to artists, and so sketchable; its great green wheel slowly revolving round and round, as though even the business of corn-grinding was a thing to be done leisurely in this lotus-eating land. Well, it is a relief for the town-tired brain to find some spot in busy England where the people, without stagnating, make haste slowly, and take work leisurely, yet for all are by no means lazy.

Farther on, to the right of our road, we came to another of the many pretty glens we passed

that day. Near the top of this is a cavern known as Merlin's Cave, where tradition has it he practised his incantations ; and if tradition is right, he must have been a wonderful magician—

For he by words could call out of the sky
Both sun and moon and make them him obey :
Change land to sea, and sea to mainland dry,
And darksome night he eke could turn to day ;
Huge hosts of men he could alone dismay,
And hosts of men of meanest things could frame.

Tradition has it, according to Dr. Brewer, that this cave is “ noted for its ghastly noises of rattling iron chains, brazen cauldrons, groans, strokes of hammers, and ringing of anvils. The cause is this : Merlin set his spirits to fabricate a brazen wall to encompass the city of Carmarthen, and as he had to call on the Lady of the Lake, bade them not slacken their labour till he returned ; but he never did return, for Vivien got him under the enchanted stone and kept him there.”

About a mile farther on we passed through Abergwili, an uninteresting village pleasantly situated at the junction of the Gwili and Towy. Here is the modern palace of the Bishops of St. Davids ; and shortly afterwards we found ourselves in Carmarthen, where we pulled up at the Ivy Bush Hotel, an ancient coaching-house mentioned in our *Paterson's Roads*, and were solemnly received by a gray-haired waiter, whom at first we mistook for a clergyman. The Ivy Bush, we discovered, had a pleasant garden behind, from which we obtained a fine view of the lower Towy, widened out to

quite a broad and important-looking river. Very restful it was that peaceful evening, agreeably tired as we were with our day's wanderings, to "moon" about that old garden, sweet with the perfume of flowers, lazily watching the small boats sailing silently along the gleaming water far below, till at last the gloaming merged into night, and the light faded from sky and river, and all the landscape was lost in a mystery of gray.

On the Towy here we noticed several of those curious little vessels called coracles, looking in the distance for all the world like half of walnut-shells afloat. These coracles are made of wicker-work, covered with either oiled cloth or tarred canvas; a narrow board is placed across the middle, and this forms an unsteady seat for the user. Not over-safe nor over-comfortable do these strange craft appear; but they are only employed for fishing, and have the merit of being cheap and handy, for their weight is so slight that they can be readily carried about by their owners. The ancient Britons used coracles of almost similar construction and dimensions, only that theirs were covered with hide; and it is noteworthy and remarkable that vessels of exactly the same form should be still employed in this go-ahead nineteenth century.

Carmarthen is not a very large town; nevertheless its streets wind about in such a planless puzzling manner, that we had some little difficulty next morning in finding our way out of it on to the Haverfordwest road; and when we did reach it, we were not quite sure whether after all we

had not gone wrong, for the first milestone on the way had "Hobb's Point, 32 miles" inscribed thereon. Now, we were bound to Haverfordwest, and had never heard of Hobb's Point before. We could not even find a place of that name anywhere on our map, yet we reasoned: Surely it must be of considerable importance to be thus boldly marked on the milestone so far away from the spot; and if we are on the highway to Haverfordwest, how is it that that town is not given thereon? The problem was too much for us, but just as we had folded our map up in despair, fortunately a clergyman came into sight and solved it for us. "No wonder you were puzzled," he said, with a pleasant smile (how gratifying it is to have a civil question answered with a smile—and it costs nothing!) Then he continued, "Hobb's Point is just beyond Pembroke, and used to be an important ferry in the coaching days; it is just at the end of Milford Haven, and, I believe, packets used to await the mails there to take them on to Ireland. Yes, you're on the right road to Haverfordwest; you branch off from the Pembroke highway at St. Clears. I certainly wonder why they still keep the name Hobb's Point on the milestones and fingerposts around." And so did we, very much. Thanking our informant for his kind reply to our query, we drove on our hilly road, with a railway winding along the valley below us. In this far western land even the trains do not seem to be in a hurry, and we actually raced a luggage train for a mile or more—and won. After that, we even

thought of trying conclusions with a passenger express, but none came along just then. It is only fair, however, to state that to ensure easy gradients the railway wound in and out a great deal, whilst our road, though very much up and down, went fairly straight, so that from point to point we had a considerable advantage in the matter of distance.

About four miles out we noticed a public-house having on its signboard the title, "Pass By." A curious and a novel one to us, manifestly intended as a challenge to the thirsty Briton to do the very opposite, and doubtless not given in vain!

Another novel thing we also noticed that day—a windmill in the course of construction. Now, I have frequently seen old windmills in ruin, or left to go to slow decay, but never before on all my travels have I seen one of these pleasing and picturesque features of the landscape actually being built. I imagined that the time had gone by for the raising of new ones, and that those remaining to us would gradually disappear as they grew old and past profitable work. It was therefore a real pleasure to find that after all the days of windmills and water-mills are not quite over, at least in a land where the winds have full play and streams are plentiful.

Passing St. Clears, a neat little village of little interest, and after a delightful drive onwards of some miles through a pleasing undulating country, though without any special features, we arrived about mid-day at the small hamlet of Whitland. We felt very

much in doubt as to whether we should find any decent inn there, failing which a picnic and a bait by the wayside was an inevitable and not altogether unpleasing alternative, for we had thirty-two hilly miles to do that day before reaching Haverford-west; and as far as we could make out from our map, there was no other place on our route at all likely to afford us any accommodation.

But, as was so often the case with us, where we least expected it there frequently we found excellent quarters. So here, where we looked for little or nothing, we discovered a very fair roadside inn with good stabling attached. Moreover, to our agreeable surprise, instead of being offered for our refreshment the everlasting ham and eggs, or never-failing bread and cheese and ale, an excellent repast of chops was provided for us, with sweets and cheese to follow; and the chops were tender and grilled to a turn,—and a well-cooked chop is not a thing to be despised by a hungry traveller, nor any one else. Not bad this for a wayside hostelry in a remote and tiny hamlet right in the heart of wild Wales! though, as a matter of fact, as far as food was concerned, we found, as a rule, that we fared the best the farther we were away from large towns. Possibly, it may be that the land-ladies of such small inns are of necessity their own cooks, and take more pains in their work and interest in their guests than mere servants would do, who are probably not paid ruinous wages, and almost to a certainty inexperienced in the art of cooking.

Out of Whitland we had at first a fairly level stretch of road, but this did not last long—such a thing seldom does in Wales! Then came a long stiff mount of a couple of miles or more, all hard, honest collar-work every yard of it. This brought us to the ridge of a hill, along which we travelled for some time on comparatively level ground. Though toilsome, we were amply repaid for our long climb, for our elevated position afforded us a most glorious panorama over a wild mountainous country. Deep down below us were dark dreary woods, their gray-green gloom being brightened here and there by the silvery sparkle of water, and relieved also by one or two blue films of smoke uprising from some unseen farmhouse or hidden cottage. Beyond these woods our vision wandered unrestrained over vast breadths of rolling sunlit uplands, and still farther away to a remote horizon of hazy hills and fading ridges of far-reaching purple-tinted moorlands that mingled with the sky or were half lost in a mystery of tender mists. A vast and truly glorious prospect, alone worth the whole drive to behold, so space-expressing in its mighty distances, so wonderful in its colouring, so charming in its variety. At one spot, over a near rounded moorland, a mountain peak rose boldly in pyramidal form, like a huge brown sugar-loaf peering out of another valley into this, its summit being now and then capped by a passing cloud as though to show us its real height. No pen however, least of all my poor pen, could do justice to so romantic a scene, or do more than

suggest its rugged charms, of a kind so delightful to a vigorous mind. I have merely attempted to give a feeble outline of it, the imagination must fill in the rest; and besides the beauty of the prospect, there was the indescribable charm of solitude, silence, and space that our lonely height gave to us. Nothing to me is more impressive than the sense of solitude and stillness of these deserted uplands, a stillness rarely broken save by the call of some strange bird, and emphasised rather than disturbed by the peculiar "sur, sur, sur" of the wild wind as it sweeps over gray boulder and coarse grass.

Then after a while we had a long descent to Canaston Bridge, which spans the river Cleddau,—a name we had never heard before; but driving tours do teach one something of the geography of one's own country. A very pretty spot is this Canaston Bridge, with the old weathered structure repeating itself in the glassy water below, stone for stone, and tint for tint.

The river here is deep and clear; its banks are well wooded, and we were tempted to rest awhile in the grateful green shade of overhanging trees, listening to the musical gurgling of the softly gliding waters below, and to the slumberous rustling of the wind-stirred foliage overhead. Is there anything in nature, I wonder, so restful to listen to as the liquid rippling and soothing babbling of running water? There is something indescribably peace-bestowing in the hushful melody of the subdued wash, wash, wash, and the quiet

gurgle, gurgle, gurgle of a mountain stream as it flows over its pebbly or rocky bed, chanting to itself in rising and falling cadences a song without words, or laughing and chattering along as the mood takes it. What a change was the lovely seclusion of this Devon-like, leafy glen, from the bleak spacious moorlands we had so recently left behind; a glen that would have made glad the heart of worthy Izaak Walton,—truly an angler's ideal haunt, a wayside beauty-spot!

Onward from Canaston Bridge it was collar-work for a while, but we readily forgave the road its sins of hilliness for the delightful views it afforded us of distant hills with wooded vales between. Then a long descent brought us to Haverfordwest. The prospect we had approaching the place was very striking. Before us the sun was setting a glowing yellow in the west, and the irregularly built town, with its gray old castle set on a height dominating the whole place in a truly lordly feudal style, showed boldly and massively against the golden sky. The slothful river below reflected the gold above, and was dotted with ships that gave a pleasant suggestion of the sea. The river imparted both life and light to a most effective townscape, if I may be allowed the term. We have landscape, and seascape, and even skyscape—why not townscape?

There was colour too as well as romance in the picture. The irregular roofed houses were a mingling of many grays, and the old castle keep (perhaps from age) had taken upon itself a darker

gray of a more purple hue. The crimson and gold of the sky was repeated in the river; the ships were a ruddy brown, their masts appearing almost black, and a haze of faint blue smoke lingering over the ancient town gave something of the feeling of mystery to the prospect. How Turner would have delighted in this view! it was essentially Turneresque,—as though, to reverse the order of things, Nature had copied one of his pictures. Turner is deemed by some people unreal, because he painted poetry and not prose; though is it not the artist's pleasing privilege to give us romance *when* he can? (and there is much virtue in that *when*). The commonplace we have with us every day—why seek to repeat it in pictures? A poem on canvas is surely as delightful as a poem in words?—to me much more so.

Said a friend one day to Turner, "I cannot see the colour in nature that you've got on your canvas." Came the reply: "No, I dare say not; but it's there all the same. It only wants seeing." So true it is that the eye requires training to really see what is before it. Many people fail to note any beauty in a scene till an artist has interpreted it to them. The best way by far to teach the eye to appreciate the everyday beauties that surround us, the wealth of colour even in common things, and the charm of changeful form everywhere, is to take up the fascinating art of sketching from nature (in water-colours as the readiest medium). Never mind though nothing be produced worth keeping, or even looking at; the mere attempt to

copy the tints before you will give an insight into countless unimagined beauties and reveal something of the marvellous variety of nature. Take a simple boulder on a moor. At a passing glance you may deem it to be only a mass of gray; but sit down before it and endeavour honestly to draw and paint it, you will then discover how much there is in that apparently gray mass. You will find the rock to abound in various tints and tones, with splashes here and there, it may be, of lichen, golden and ruddy and silvery. The crevices you will find to vary in colour from a wonderful pearly-gray, where the light is reflected into them, to the richest red-brown (so deep as to seem at first glance almost black where the shadow is the strongest); and on the surface, where weathered, you will find green and gray and russets, with bits of pale yellow and softest touches of silvery white, with many other markings, all contrasting and commingling in a delightful harmony; and you will then realise that what you at first supposed to be only a rock of one uniform gray, is composed of countless tender tints, and abounds in colour. After that you will not pass a boulder by without taking note of some of its charms; you will have trained your eye to see what others, less fortunate than you, never see. So it will be in everything—in an old building; in rock, or stream, or river; on the moor, or hill, or mountain; in the field or in the forest; by the sea, or by the lake, or wheresoever you are. After a course of sketching from nature, you will begin to see beauties

where before you never suspected them ; you will have gained in truth a fresh sense that will prove a costless and lasting pleasure.

Take a walk with an artist in the country, if ever you have the opportunity, and you will be surprised at the pictures he perceives everywhere, where possibly you will only see fields and trees and hedgerows. Few things bring a greater reward than the insight given into the beauties of nature by an attempt to sketch them, even though the result of the attempt be a failure to produce a picture. Look for colour and you will find it, look for beauty and you will find it, and look for ugliness and you will find it,—plenty of it and to spare, wherever man has spoilt nature ; but you need not seek for ugliness, it profits nothing.

However, to return to ourselves. Driving in to the town of Haverfordwest, we sought and found excellent quarters at the Castle Inn, a comfortable old-fashioned hostelry that stands beneath the very shadow of the ancient feudal stronghold. Early next morning before breakfast we mounted the steep crag to the ruined keep, which is dismantled and uninteresting, save for its commanding position, which affords a fine view of the town. That perhaps repays the short though stiff mount. In the case of Haverfordwest Castle, truly "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view." It is well sometimes not to see everything when on tour ; you may thus spoil many a romantic impression, as a painter may ruin a picture by too much detail, leaving nothing to appeal to the imagination. A tourist is not a collector of facts.

CHAPTER XII

"Sixteen miles and seventeen hills"—Threatening weather—A bleak country—Roch Castle—A desolate stretch of sea-coast—A terrible hill—A quaint village—A curious harbour—Caught in a storm—St. Davids city and cathedral—A back-handed compliment—Jokes in carving and stories in wood—Old tombs—St. David's shrine—Dust or saintly relics?—A Gothic-like act.

HEARING that it was a rough drive over a barren country on to St. Davids, we asked the ostler at Haverfordwest about the way. "Well," said he, in reply to our query, "it's sixteen miles and seventeen hills to St. Davids" (he pronounced it St. Daf-its), "and some of the hills is pretty bad 'uns; a hard country for horses,"—and after driving over it we were quite of that worthy ostler's opinion.

Unfortunately it happened, having such a wild and stiff stage before us, that the weather, which had smiled upon us for so long, now looked frowning and threatening. Still we had really but little cause to complain, for we had driven all the long way from London, taking our ease on the road, sketching, exploring, photographing, and generally enjoying ourselves (which was the purpose of our outing, for at times pleasure-seeking is a duty); and certainly whatever else we did we did not hurry,

yet so far we had not experienced any wet, at least whilst in the open (as a matter of fact, however, I believe it did rain during the night we slept at Broadway, but that was all),—not a bad record for a country which is so well abused for possessing a moist climate! But now things looked, to say the least, very doubtful. The wind was blowing freshly from the south-west, hardly a fine-weather quarter (certainly not in Wales, so near the Atlantic, from which our worst storms mostly come), and overhead ominous dark-gray clouds were sweeping along threateningly one after another in endless succession. We consulted the barometer, and found that it had fallen considerably during the night to “Rain,” and when we gently tapped it in the faint hope that it might be inclined to rise again, it provokingly did the very reverse—farther, and decidedly, falling towards “Much Rain.” There was no doubt but that the outlook was unfavourable; so before leaving the inn-yard we took the precaution of getting our mackintoshes and waterproof aprons out, and of making all things “snug and taut” for bad weather; and thus prepared to do battle with the elements, we ventured forth to brave the “sixteen miles and seventeen hills” in spite of sundry doubtful shakes of the head from the small crowd that had collected to see us off. It is astonishing what an interest almost every one we came across seemed to take in our expedition. People nowadays are so used to travelling by rail, that they are fairly surprised to meet with anybody who ventures to traverse the country in his own

conveyance by road. But one and all agreed how delightful it must be.

We had a stiff climb out of Haverfordwest, but after this for some distance our road though rough was not remarkably hilly, and we thought that its character had been much maligned; but we completely changed our minds long before we reached our destination.

We started in the hope that the rain might keep off for a while, but we had not proceeded far before we almost wished that it would come down at once, for the road was inches deep in dust, and the wind blew the dust about in blinding clouds. It penetrated everywhere, and we were soon like millers; and I know that the driver of the dog-cart for a time lost his temper, and I do not blame him much. Wet we could keep out, but waterproofs and mackintoshes are certainly not dust-proof; ours at least failed in that respect, though they had successfully resisted many a storm in former journeys when crossing the shelterless moors and wild mountain districts of the "North Country."

I verily believe that for the first mile or two out of Haverfordwest we both voted driving tours failures; but, after all, this dusty experience (though intensely disagreeable at the time) was the only fly in our ointment during the whole of our otherwise most enjoyable outing. We felt indeed afterwards, when all the unpleasantness was over, what ungrateful beings we were to grumble so about such a comparatively trifling thing as a few miles of dusty road, even though it were a *very* dusty one.

Indeed, the matter was so soon forgotten, that I feel it hardly worth mentioning here; but as a truthful chronicler of our expedition, I am bound to relate the evil as well as the good things thereof.

How the wind did blow that day! In fierce fitful gusts it came, wailing over the open uplands, and whistling through the storm-bent stunted trees, that seemed to have a hard struggle to exist at all on those bleak wilds. The dust was so blown about that we could trace our road for miles ahead by the smoke-like line it made. "If only the wind would go down or the rain would come," we said to ourselves, "it would be bearable;" but neither happened. Now and then truly, between the blasts, a few large drops would fall, but nothing more. Still it was a grand drive and a novel experience, and after a while, though the squally "sou'-wester" howled and blew as hard as ever, the dust was not nearly so terrible; it seemed to us that it must have been literally blown clean from off the road, and so we began to enjoy ourselves again, and even to glory in our rough drive.

The country we passed through had a wild physiognomy (if I may be allowed that term), a stony barren look that was impressive in its very barrenness, and quite in keeping with the stormy weather and brooding day,—the smile of sunshine would little have suited its rugged desolation. There was no special feature at first in the landscape, beyond its wild character, with the notable exception of the ruined keep of Roch Castle, which stood conspicuously out, dark and solemn,

against the windy sky : a landmark for miles around.

About half-way to St. Davids we came in view of the sea at a point on the cliffs overlooking St. Brides Bay, and we rejoiced at the wide prospect of the tumbling waste of white-capped waters. It was delightful and invigorating also to inhale the fresh, moist, salt-laden air. From this spot a long descent brought us right down to Newgale, a small bay set between two great headlands, with a solitary forsaken-looking little inn at the farther end, not much larger than a cottage. Here our road ran by the shore, there being only a bank of pebbles between us and the breaking billows. What a grand sea was on just then, and what a glorious colour the water was—a dark indigo on the upheaving, distant horizon ; gradually growing through varying grays to a translucent bottle-green where the curling waves thundered on the wet shingle, shivering themselves with a loud boom into shattered fragments of almost blinding spray. Then as the broken, baffled waters receded, what a sullen indescribable long-drawn hiss they made,—a sound not to be put into words ; and mingled with that hiss and the far-resounding roar of the breaking sea was the uncanny whistling of the wind, now blowing fiercer than ever, and the weird cry of storm-driven gulls—a plaintive, piercing cry easily heard above the raging of the sea and the tumult of the storm.

It was a wild outlook,—the stormy stretch of shingly foam-covered beach bounded on either hand

by the steadfast crags, the great white-crested waves rushing one after another upon it and crashing close by our side ; but the scene had a wonderful charm for us, though it was dreary and desolate enough almost to weary an anchorite. The lonely inn looked so lonely, the shingle-strewn shore so utterly melancholy, the rocky coast so rugged and inhospitable, the sky above so ominous and gloomy. But still we felt with the poet that

There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar.

Better this at any rate than the glare and glitter of the promenade of fashionable watering-places, with the inevitable iron pier and discordant German band,—the seaside vulgarised.

Great rounded louring clouds, bulging with aqueous vapour, were racing along overhead, some of them as they swept by seemed almost to touch the very cliffs above ; and as we drove up the steep hill out of Newgale it seemed as though we were driving right into the clouds. The wind now blew cold as well as strong, so that we did not find ourselves a bit too warm though enveloped in our mackintoshes. An acceptable bit of level way succeeded the climb—level by comparison that is,—and then we came to a precipitous descent, so precipitous indeed, that even with the brake hard on the carriage ran on the horses, and we had to proceed with the greatest caution. It was more like the roof of a house than a bit of road. I have no ambition to drive down it again. We were

relieved when we got to the bottom in safety. "Thank goodness," we exclaimed, "there's another of the seventeen hills done."

At the bottom of this precipitous descent we found ourselves in Solva, one of the quaintest villages imaginable, situated at the foot of a deep romantic ravine. Up this narrow glen the sea runs in and bends about, thus forming a small crag-bound harbour. So does this little water-inlet wind, that, though close at hand, from the village you cannot even get a glimpse of the open sea. At the base of the crags, besides the water, there is just room for a mill and some cottages, which are scattered about anyhow, manifestly having been built wherever there chanced to be sufficient space for them; and there they stand in picturesque confusion with a delightful disregard for uniformity, with coasting schooners and sloops anchored close beside their doors. Though land-locked thus, the whole place smacks and smells of the sea; there is a genuine marine flavour about every bit of it.

Solva reminded us distantly of Boscastle in Cornwall, but Solva is more romantic; indeed, I think that it is the most romantic spot in Britain. And this is saying a good deal, for during my wanderings on wheels for years past I have come across and explored many a remote nook and corner and out-of-the-way hamlet, and my sketch-book shows how romantic and picturesque a number of them are.

Yet though so romantic and eminently paintable, I have never seen Solva represented in a picture,

but Boscastle I have time and times again. Will not some artist take the hint, nor value it the less because he gets it for nothing, and hie him thither with his colours and canvases, his paints and paper, and give us this genuine, old-world, unspoilt spot? From the glance we had in passing, there appears to be a decent little hostel in the place. The inhabitants also appear to be primitive and picturesque, and lazy enough to make good models. I know of no one who can so contentedly and with such self-satisfaction do nothing all day long and yet not look actually idle as the nondescript individual, half-sailor, half-landsman, who loiters about small fishing-ports smoking a perpetual pipe, on the outlook for a job that never seems to come to him. However, he has the merit of being picturesquely dressed, and makes an excellent model, with not a suggestion of artificiality about him; and nothing is more to his mind than to stand still, do nothing, and earn money. To such, an artist is always "a real gentleman." Some day we hope ourselves to go a-sketching at far-away Solva.

On leaving the queer little harbour, we had to face another steep hill; and as we rose, views of distant wooded dells and bare brown uplands opened out before us, suddenly to be eclipsed from our sight by a mist and the slanting lines of falling rain, for at last the storm broke over us. As we were, at the time, only a mile or two from our destination, it was provoking that the rain did not hold up just a little longer, for then we should have been able to have boasted that we had driven all

the way from London to St. Davids without a drop of rain,—a feat one might never so nearly accomplish again. However, the rain was a reality, and had to be faced; so, fighting our way against the steady downpour, we arrived in due course at St. Davids, very wet, yet very jolly, in spite of the long trying stage. Here we pulled up at the Grove Hotel, an unpretending little inn, where we received a hearty welcome, and soon made ourselves at home. So ended our pleasant pilgrimage to "sacred St. Davids."

In the evening the rain-clouds lifted, and a suspicion of wan yellow light showed where the sun was setting amongst a confusion of gray clouds. The welcome though watery gleam tempted us out to take a glance at the place before the darkness of night came on.

Here we were at last in remote St. Davids, and what did we find?—a curious city of cottages, with its old cathedral hidden in a hollow, and an ugly modern chapel set boldly on a height. A city where the morning paper is unknown, and without a railway, or gas, or even a mayor and town council (though possibly none the worse for that). A city with thatched cottages and even hedgerows in its main street, which was guiltless of a foot-pavement. A city of anomalies, surely the strangest spot in all Great Britain, well worthy of a pilgrimage of a thousand miles to see, even though the pilgrimage had to be taken all afoot.

An indescribable feeling of remoteness came over us as we wandered about the sleepy forsaken-

looking place ; the manifest air of departed grandeur that prevailed everywhere was quite pathetic. Sauntering along the roadway, we noticed fowls strutting about, and ducks delving into pools by the side where the pavement should be. Fowls and ducks were in greater visible numbers than human inhabitants. We felt almost as though we had suddenly awakened out of a sort of Rip Van Winkle slumber, only backwards instead of forwards, so unreal did all things seem ; so utterly unlike was this to any other place of which we had read, or heard, or been told. And because of all this, St. Davids fascinated us ; it was impressive in its stony desolation. *Sic transit gloria mundi* is written over it. Truly its glories are gone, yet there it stands too proud to appeal for any sympathy. Above all, you feel that St. Davids must be seen to be realised ; it is not to be described guide-book fashion ; it is the very antithesis of nineteenth-century rush and progress ; it is asleep, not dead ; it simply exists. Here, if anywhere, a portion of medieval England (or Wales, to be accurate) survives, indifferent to and unaffected by "the steamship, the railway, or the thoughts that shake mankind." And it seems almost as though it may sleep on for ever thus, unchanged and unchanging in an age of change.

The city stands on high ground. The cathedral, as I have said, is placed deep down in a hollow, so that the top of its tower is about on a level with the main street. Where erst was the market-place still stands the old weathered cross on the

top of a tapering stone shaft, which is elevated on six steps. The cross (of which I have given an illustration at the commencement of this book) has been restored, but even the restored upper part, if less time-worn, is storm-stained and gray like the rest; wind and rain, sun and frost, have done their work, and toned it all down to one harmonious general tint. There is nothing new-looking at ancient St. Davids. For all that we could tell from our sight, we might be pilgrims arriving there three centuries or more ago.

From London to St. Davids—what a startling contrast! From the wealthy, matter-of-fact, many-peopled metropolis to this poor tiny city, the most uncommercial and sleepy one imaginable! It is well to travel, say two hundred miles or more by road, if only to realise the meaning of a journey to our forefathers, for to us the term has lost its old significance. To-day we step into a comfortable cushioned carriage and are conveyed from spot to spot, with scant or no knowledge of all that lies between them; and perhaps little care. A voyage likewise has no longer any terrors or surprises for us. We have turned the Atlantic into a ferry, and made it almost commonplace. We circumnavigate the globe in floating palaces. If we know nothing of the pain, still less do we know anything of the poetry and pleasure of olden travel—the wayside welcomes, the coachman's chatter, the exhilarating feeling of driving fast through the fresh country air, the beauty of the scenery, or the general cheerfulness engendered by the juxtaposition of all these elements.

position of sociable companions. Of old, men took voyages in search of adventure and excitement : we often take them now for pure pleasure, with no thought of adventure, merely looking upon them as a superior sort of picnic, and of a railway journey we think nothing whatever. From London to Edinburgh by rail, and from London to the same place by road are two very different things, as no one knows better than I do, having driven over the ground more than once, and having railed it often. By road you see, enjoy, and understand the country you pass through ; by rail you don't. So it was that, on arriving at St. Davids, we felt that we had made a real journey as understood of old ; and we had a certain indefinable sense of pleasure in the knowledge that we had left our own door in our own conveyance, and had, unaided, driven the whole way from London to far-off St. Davids, right across England and Wales. And we realised the distance we had travelled ; the miles and miles of changeful loveliness and varied scenes we had passed through were impressed on our memory never to be forgotten.

The next day we devoted to seeing the cathedral, and to exploring St. Davids Head and the wild coast round about. We woke up, fortunately, to a fine morning, and a clear wind-swept sky, with a rising barometer, promised fair weather for a time at any rate. The storm overnight had apparently blown itself out, which was a matter for congratulation.

To reach the cathedral we had to pass through

an ancient tower gateway, upheld now by great buttresses, and to descend I do not know how many steps worn concave with the tread of bygone generations. At the bottom of the steps we found the aged clerk awaiting us, as our thoughtful landlord had arranged he should, to show us over the ancient fane. Whilst descending the steps we had an excellent general view of the cathedral, and the ruined Bishop's Palace beyond. Our guide told us that he was eighty-five, and had been a clerk for sixty-three years,—not a bad term of service,—and he looked hale and hearty when we saw him. In listening to his remarks, we bore in mind his statement that he had shown many learned and famous archæologists, architects, ecclesiologists, and antiquaries, foreign as well as English, over the old cathedral, and being a man of more than average intelligence, and manifestly taking a great interest in the sacred edifice, he doubtless had profited by what he had heard.

Entering the cathedral, two things struck us as being unique—the flat and finely carved oak roof with pendent ornaments (more like the ceiling of a palace or a baronial hall than of a cathedral), and the gradual rise of the floor from west to east, or perhaps I should be more correct in saying from the western door to the foot of the high altar steps. Pointing to the fretted roof, the clerk said, “It's of Irish oak, and is always clean ; there's never any cobwebs on it,—that's the result of St. Patrick banishing all the reptiles and vermin from Ireland ; so they say.” The way he looked at us when he

uttered the saving clause was delightful. He reminded us of a guide who was showing some friends of mine over a famous foreign church, and who pointed out to them some relics that were held in high local repute as performing miraculous cures and the like. Said one of my friends to the guide, "And do you believe in them?" "Oui, madame, certainement—over zee left." The same guide (who was exceedingly proud of his English, that he had picked up goodness knows how), wishing to be polite to a lady of the party who was making a sketch of the church, after begging permission to look at it, exclaimed, "Madame, it is a fluke; it is a beastly fluke!" But to return to the oak roof. Several opinions, learned and otherwise, have been given as to the reason for this curious departure from the ordinary Gothic groined roofing that is universal in such edifices. Looking down the nave, we observed that the pillars, massive though they are, leaned slightly outwards on either side. Doubtless this was owing to the lateral pressure of the heavy weight of the original groined stone roof (as the general design of the building and the shafts between the arches seem to plainly show once existed). Probably the low and damp situation of the building helped to weaken the piers. Therefore, it appears to me, that the reason for substituting a roof of a lighter material than stone is not far to seek. Indeed, there appears to be no other plausible explanation of this bit of architectural, though effective, incongruity,—not more incongruous, how-

ever, and more pleasing, than the combination, so frequently seen, of massive Norman masonry with the light graceful Early English work.

On one of the pillars, to the right of the nave, the clerk pointed out to us a fast-fading fresco. This was discovered, we were informed, when the disfiguring but protecting whitewash was removed some years ago. Most of the archaeologists our guide had conducted over the building agreed that, judging from the crown, the date of the armour, and other details, the fresco is meant to represent Henry IV., though why that monarch should be painted on a pillar here, thus, I cannot say. Then, after inspecting and admiring the beautiful rood-screen, we saw the tomb of Bishop Morgan (deceased 1504). At the end of this is a curious carving of the Resurrection. At the time of the restoration by the late Sir Gilbert Scott, we were told that the tomb of the famous Bishop Gower (who built the palace hard by, and died in 1347) was opened, and his skeleton found enclosed in a leaden coffin, with only his pastoral staff. The tomb of Bishop Beck (deceased 1293) was also opened, and his bones were found, with a portion of his flannel shroud—it seems strange that the flannel should have been preserved so long,—also his pastoral staff, chalice, and thumb ring.

Next we inspected the fifteenth-century carved oak stalls, some of the "miserere" seats of which are both grotesquely and quaintly carved, and have their tales to tell to those who can read them. On

one is a boat tossing about on a rough sea ; two monks are shown in it, one is at the end steering, the other in the middle with his head over the side terribly sick ; the monk steering is laughing at his unfortunate brother—a joke in wood. There was something so truly comical about this playful conceit, that we could not resist laughing at it, even in the cathedral. I hope that we did not shock the worthy clerk ; I think not, for we noticed him smiling sedately, quite a proper clerical smile. On another seat, five pigs are shown attacking a dog ; the meaning of this we could not fathom. Another, and the most striking of all the "misereres," is pregnant with meaning, and a startling contemporary satire on the priesthood by those who should know most about them. This shows a cowled priest with the head of a fox (and the carver has given the fox a look of cunning that only a medieval craftsman could suggest) ; the priest is holding out the paten to a layman, represented as a goose (and the goose looks just as silly as the fox does cunning), whilst hidden behind the fox-priest is a fat flagon of wine. The clerk said that a high church dignitary who saw this exclaimed that "it is disgraceful and should be at once removed." I must find room to describe just one more of these very interesting seats. This has carved on it two dogs snarling at each other ; one has a shoulder blade in his mouth, the other a leg bone. "Can you make anything out of that ?" asked the clerk of us, and we were obliged to confess that we could not. "Don't you know the old rhyme ?" he said,—

"Taffy was a Welshman,
Taffy was a thief,
Taffy came to my house
And stole a leg of beef:
I went to Taffy's house,
Taffy was from home;
Taffy came to my house
And stole a shoulder bone!"

That's it in carving." Very possibly; but we did not feel so very sure as to the clerk's interpretation thereof.

Next we saw in the presbytery the fine altar tomb of Purbeck marble to Edmund Tudor, father of Henry VII., round which runs the following inscription:—

Under this marble stone here enclosed rest the bones of that noble lord Edmund Earl of Richmond father and brother to kings the which departed out of this world in the year of our Lord God a thousand, four hundred, fifty and six, the first day of the month of November on whose soul Almighty Jesu have Mercy. Amen.

The clerk told us that with the others this tomb was also opened at the time of the restoration, and that he saw the skull of the noble earl in a stone coffin. But why this opening of old tombs? it almost seems as though it were done merely to satisfy an idle curiosity. The dead might surely be allowed to rest in peace! There is one advantage in not being famous, you have the probability of being left alone when laid to rest in the bosom of mother Earth.

Then we came to the once far-famed shrine of St. David,—so famed indeed of old, and held

in such high sanctity, that two pilgrimages to St. Davids were held as equal to one to Rome. The shrine is of carved stone, having on the outer side four quatrefoil openings, through which the pious pilgrims placed their offerings. These were received in a chest below, and were collected weekly and divided amongst themselves by the monks. The clerk assured us that upon one occasion when he conducted the superior of a certain monastery over the cathedral, the said superior when he came to the shrine reverentially with his hand removed what dust there was there and very carefully placed it in some paper. "Whatever are you doing?" naturally exclaimed the clerk to him. "Doing," the modern monk replied, "I am taking these relics of the saint to place on our high altar at ——" But the clerk was a matter-of-fact man, not given to romancing, so he ventured to suggest that it was merely recent dust, and could not see what good it could do upon an altar. Whereupon he got a reproachful reprimand for such levity. "Yes," remarked our guide, "I do get some strange people here now and again."

Outside the cathedral, by the wall of the still ruined Lady chapel, we came to the stone effigy of a knight crusader, perfect in part, and though exposed to all weathers, the details of chain-armour were quite distinct. This effigy was actually deliberately cut in two, and the one portion destroyed, by a local stone mason at the time of an earlier restoration, in order to make room for a rude buttress to support the falling wall. This is, I

think, one of the most Goth-like acts that has ever come under my notice.

As we were leaving this old historic fane, the clerk told us that Bishop Thirlwall when he first came there did not know a word of Welsh, but that six months after he became bishop he heard him preach in that language—and preach well.

CHAPTER XIII

The coast around St. Davids—Porth Clais—A tiny harbour—A primitive bridge—A glorious ocean panorama—Ramsey Island and Sound—A colourful country—St. Justinian's ruined shrine—Medieval miracles—Old-world beliefs—Haunted caverns—St. Davids Head—Our *Ultima Thule*—Silent stories of the sea—A wayside Celtic cross—An untravelled country—Sign-posts unnecessary luxuries—A hint for driving tourists.

HAVING inspected the cathedral, and seen the beautiful ruins of the Bishop's Palace, with its fine stone carving and lovely rose window, we set out on foot to explore the famous headland and the weather-beaten coast around, with its grand rock scenery and sea-worn caverns. A glorious, wild, windswept, barren upland extends round St. Davids, boulder-strewn, and dotted in places with rude prehistoric remains, sacred wells, desecrated chapels, and ruined cliff castles.

The fences of the few fields round about the city—I had almost written village—consist of wide stone walls; the stones doubtless being originally gathered from off the land enclosed. These walls are capped with flat grass sods, and being, as I have said, wide, form excellent footpaths; and for the sake of the view they afforded, we walked some way along these raised tracks.

Taking our map with us, we set off towards the little harbour of Porth Clais, which served the monks of old, and now serves the little city, as the means of obtaining necessaries from the outer world. Not that Porth Clais is a large harbour (indeed it is a small edition of that of Solva), consisting, as it does, of a tiny inlet of the sea which runs up a narrow glen, down which a small stream finds its way. At high tide small coasting schooners can just manage to enter here, to be stranded high and dry when the tide is out. Our course was not difficult to find. Having struck upon the stream, we had merely to follow it down seaward to reach Porth Clais. By the way, this stream, which we could almost have jumped across even at its widest part, was dignified on our map by the title of the Allan river! A very quaint spot is Porth Clais, with its broken stone pier, and rugged cliffs that tower high above the masts of the tiny trading vessels. After having made a sketch of this romantic, Liliputian harbour, possibly the smallest in Britain, or in the world, we proceeded to cross the Allan a little higher up by a primitive though picturesque foot-bridge, consisting of two flat stone slabs laid upon some boulders roughly built in the bed of the stream so as to form a rude pier in the middle. Then we made straight for the coast again, and mounting to the top of the nearest cliff, a glorious prospect of sunlit sea and far-stretching rocky and rugged crags was before us. A vast expanse of sky and land and water. We stood on the summit of a mighty headland,

rough and indented : around us was a sea of golden gorse glowing in the sunshine, a perfect miracle of colour. It was prickly work making our way through the thick gorse, but we managed to strike upon a sheep track, and got on fairly well, as long as we followed it ; but unfortunately sheep have no eye for scenery, and their tracks did not lead far in the direction we desired.

As we scrambled along we had a magnificent ocean panorama, with a many-bayed, foam-fringed, cliff-bound coast to our right, and to our left, across a yeasty, stormy sound, the great hilly island of Ramsey, with groups of smaller islands, islets, and isolated rocks, forming altogether quite an archipelago. How different all this from the soft southern coast with its glaring chalk cliffs and sandy shore. Finding some friendly boulders amongst the wilderness of gorse, we seated ourselves on them for a while, and at our leisure enjoyed the rare prospect, and took in deep breaths of the keen, invigorating air that came to us straight from off the wide Atlantic, beyond suspicion pure. For once we realised the fact that simply breathing was a pleasure. If only we could have such fresh air laid on by pipes or otherwise to our homes in smoky London, so that we might turn it on when we pleased ! But I fear the dream is too good ever to come true. Fancy, when half-asphyxiated by a November fog, being able to fill our rooms with fresh air, forced from the sea, or downs, or moors. To live in town and breathe and sleep in pure country air—is the idea too far-fetched ? Science has done so much

THE SOUTH END OF RAMSEY SOUND



for us, could it not do this? Surely it does not seem more astonishing, more impossible of accomplishment, than some of the modern miracles it has performed?

It was, to us, a supreme delight to rest on that lonely spot, "the world forgetting, and by the world forgot," with nothing within sight to tell of man,—not even a bit of broken wall, nor a solitary sail upon the distant sea. We might have been on an uninhabited land for all that was within the range of our vision; and so we chose for the time to imagine ourselves. A little romancing, now and again, in this matter-of-fact age can do no harm—it takes one out of oneself; we have the stern everyday world quite enough with us. The poet, the novelist, and the painter create romances and pictures for us. Why should we not sometimes create them for ourselves?

As we sat there we could hear the dull boom, boom, boom of the waves as they broke at the foot of the steadfast cliffs far below. Gulls in numbers, glancing white in the light, and gray in shade, circled round about the crags, and darted in and out of their recesses, as though never weary of being on the wing; some even flew close by us, so close indeed that we could almost have touched them, so little did they seem to fear. It was a delight to watch them sailing along so swiftly through the air without any apparent motion; they appeared to glide rather than fly. What a joyous life of wild freedom is that of the sea-gull!

How solitary it all was; and yet we did not

feel the solitude. A true Nature-lover can never feel desolate or dull when alone with her, and least of all when in sight and sound of the infinite sea, however forsaken he may feel in a crowd of his fellow-creatures.

For I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

After a time we aroused ourselves from our reverie, and proceeded with our exploration of the coast. A rough though most delightful walk it proved, but in that life-giving air we felt that we could go anywhere and do anything. Skirting the rugged cliffs, scrambling over boulders, and making our way somehow through the thick prickly gorse, we presently began a descent to the little sunny cove of Porthlisky (if we read our map aright), a charming little bay, where the sea quietly washed in ; clear as crystal, with tiny crisp waves. Then another climb past a ruined cottage brought us once more on to high ground, and to a prominent point on the cliffs, from whence we gained a fine view of the whole of Ramsey Island, and its eddying sound, with its swirling, churning sea and

dangerous under-currents. From this elevated spot also we obtained a good view of St. Davids, the chapel being far more conspicuous than the cathedral. The city from our position showed well above the level of the topmost part of the tower of the ancient fane. There is nothing in a distant prospect of St. Davids to suggest—as at Canterbury, York, Durham, and other cathedral cities—the ancient supremacy of the Church as expressed in a lordly pile of stone dominating the whole place.

Resuming our rough ramble along the rugged coast that bounds the sound towards the mainland, we reached a point opposite to the north end of Ramsey Island. Here we had to make our way through a perfect sea of gorse, heather, and bracken, interspersed with great gray granite boulders. It was a glorious sight,—the world of colour around us; the pure blue of the sky above, with the dazzling white of the rounded clouds sailing majestically across; the deep, dark indigo of the distant sea gradually taking a greenish hue nearer the shore; the rich purple of the heather, the glowing gold of the gorse (like patches of sunlight scattered about, so bright it seemed), the red and yellow of the bracken, and the olive-green of the long lank grass, together with the many wonderful tints of the weather and storm worn cliffs, formed a picture simply abounding in a wealth and glow of colour that even fair Italy could not surpass—if she could equal.

When will the painters of the dull gray school learn that England, away from smoke-stained cities,

is in truth a land of colour? They need not go far afield from their loved London (where they paint their pictures *indoors*) to find this out. Let them for once try a study out of doors; let them go to the nearest common, when the gorse is in bloom, and paint *that* in the golden sunshine, if they can; or let them try their hand at a heather-clad mountain in the glory of an autumn day. Whatever the English landscape is, it is not gray, nor brown, nor dull. Let them give us the bright glory of the sunlit country. Even on a cloudy (so-called gray) day, there is in rural England everywhere, far from smoky towns, a wealth of subtle colour. Let any one take one of these gray pictures of the French school out of doors (as I have done) and compare it with a similar scene in nature on the dullest, grayest day to be found, and whoever does so will realise how utterly false it is; untrue in part, and unfaithful as a whole. There is no excuse to hang gloom on our walls, when nature is so bright and beautiful. Looking on a landscape picture in our room should give one the idea of looking out of a window upon a view,—why not, when we can, have a cheerful, sunny prospect to gaze at?

On the cliffs here we discovered a small castle, quite dwarfed to insignificance by the mighty crags around and the wide expanse of open sea and sky. How trifling these two immensities make any work of man seem! Farther away, perched on the top of a precipice, we reached the ruined Capel Stinan, or St. Justinian's Chapel, roofless and decayed.

standing all alone amid a desolation of rocks. St. Justinian, according to ancient legend (which scoffing modern unbelievers in such medieval traditions have declared to be outrageous), lived the life of a holy anchorite on lone Ramsey's isle, and came under the notice of St. David on account of the many miracles he wrought, and because of these and the sanctity of his life, St. David made him his confessor. One day St. Justinian was waylaid and murdered, his head being cut off, his murderers being immediately turned into lepers. St. Justinian's body, however, at once rose from the ground, and taking his head under his arm he swam across the sound, and landed at the foot of the spot where the chapel stands, which was built by St. David to receive it. The chapel was restored in 1509 by Bishop Vaughan; since then it has fallen into its present decay, a crumbling shell of four walls, open to wind and weather. A pretty "tall thing," as an American would say, even in medieval miracles. But in those days of unquestioning belief, or superstition, the bounds of the credulity of the unlearned appear to have had no limit, and, according to Charles Kingsley, "the priests imposed shamefully upon the faith of the poor people" with their meaningless miracles. It was verily an

Age of faith—of faith in marvels,
And itself the greatest marvel,
When so many marvels happened,
That men no more marvelled at them.

What a mighty gulf there seems between then

and now ; the ideas of man in those few centuries how changed ! But the sea and cliffs around are just the same to-day as when the devout (if ignorant) pilgrims of old walked along the weary and stony way to the lonely chapel to make their offerings at St. Justinian's shrine. We could not help wondering whether those medieval pilgrims had any eye for scenery ; if so, the wild, glorious prospect all around of barren rock, steep cliff, and the great stretch of island-dotted ocean must have impressed them, one would imagine.

From the spot where the ruined chapel stands we had a grand view of Ramsey, with its bold coast and cruel rocks, round which the sea fretted and foamed unceasingly. The careful mariner must needs give these a wide berth. Northward our prospect was bounded by the great barren promontory of St. Davids Head. Between us and this stretched a much-indented, ironbound coast, with little shelterless, shoreless bays. All round the coast at the foot of the cliffs are many sea-worn caves ; and as we listened we could hear the waves beating into some of these with a sullen resounding roar. Small wonder, in the olden days when men believed in the most childish traditions, it should be held by the primitive seafaring folk that these caverns were haunted by evil spirits, and that the simple fisherman should devoutly cross himself as he sailed past them in the uncertain gloaming. We are more practical now, and less poetical ; the printing-press has ruined romance—except of the penny-a-line description of the daring highwayman,

the bold smuggler, and the like, which flourishes mightily. We have taught the rising generation how to read, but we have not taught them what to read. We print good books and "goody" books, as well as utter rubbish, at the same price. The youth of to-day infinitely prefers the rubbish, as do his betters, who select the latest sensational novel from the libraries and devour it at home.

How wild, and weird, and desolate the scene was! There we stood on a deserted shore by a sailless sea; the desecrated chapel and ruined castle told of man passed away long centuries ago, but there was nothing to tell of man present. We felt almost like the famous New Zealander, standing truly, not on the broken arch of London Bridge, but standing by the shore of an uninhabited Britain!

Then with a long walk, or rather scramble, entailing much hard work and many ups and downs, we ended a most delightful day's wanderings by climbing to the top of St. Davids Head—the most westerly point of the Principality; the Land's End of Wales; the *Ultima Thule* of our journey. Here at last we stood on the mighty, wind-swept promontory that stretches out defiantly into the stormy ocean. So far westward had we gone, we could go no farther.

The whole way from London we had been driving towards the setting sun; and though it may appear a trifle to the thoughtless, it is far more pleasurable at the end of your day's stage to travel westwards having each evening the glow, and often the glory, of the sunset before you, than to travel

away from it into the cool gray of the evening. The sun, unknowingly to ourselves, attracts us with its cheerful light. Often and often, when wandering over the free Sussex Downs in a purposeless fashion, busy with my own thoughts, have I found myself, all unconsciously, bending my footsteps westward to the golden light.

St. Davids Head, as I have said, is a lofty, rugged promontory, almost oppressively gloomy in its barren wildness ; it is like and yet unlike to the better known Cornish Land's End. It has the rare advantage, in these days of cheap travel and rapid transit, of complete freedom from the almost ubiquitous tripper. At the Land's End the romance of the wild scene is more or less spoilt by the numerous hosts of excursion parties who drive over from Penzance all day long and picnic round about, and mingle their boisterous laughter and inharmonious singing with the solemn chanting of the sea, and the weird cry of the wandering gull ; to say nothing of the abundant traces of their occupation they leave scattered about in the shape of broken bottles and sundry other fragments. There are certain spots in the world that are impressive for their loneliness, and that are robbed of their charm by any too visible sign of man's work, or by a too-pronounced indication of his material presence. Of such is the Land's End. Moreover, right on the top of that famous headland, stands an hotel. And though a great authority has declared that "the finest scenery in the world is improved by a good hotel in the foreground," it is not every

one to whom it is given to agree in this dictum. A good hotel is a desirable blessing to the traveller, but all things have their proper place. Let an hotel be close to fine scenery, readily accessible, but not a part of it, unless, like an old coaching inn, it is in harmony with its surroundings and forms an integral part of the scene.

Returning inland to St. Davids, we passed through a bleak country; but in parts it seemed almost soft and gentle, compared with the dreary desolation of the coast, which was almost depressing in its barren grandeur. Here and there the land was enclosed by rude stone walls, loosely put together; and in some places the fences were formed out of pieces of wreck roughly fixed in an uneven line. These relics of the deep but too plainly told their tristful tale. More pathetic than any words was their sad and silent story of the cruel sea, and of ships that never reached their haven—and what of the brave mariners?

It was late and dark by the time we returned to our little inn, hungry and tired; but the good motherly landlady had not forgotten to provide for our wants, and I must confess that we did more than justice to the simple though excellent repast that she had prepared for us. Climbing along the bracing, breezy cliffs of the wild Welsh coast is healthy, hungry work, but it is not a good thing for one's boots.

After a sound, refreshing sleep, we awoke next morning feeling fit for anything; the combined tonic of the sea and mountain air had not been lost

upon us. Overnight we had consulted our maps, with the result that we had concluded that our next stage should be to Fishguard, and that from there we would work round the coast as far as Cardigan, from which town we would strike inland on the homeward journey.

Before leaving St. Davids we strolled out as far as a solitary windmill that stood near our inn upon a bleak, open piece of ground, in order to make a sketch of it, as the old building had arrived at that age when it was picturesquely perfect, though perhaps the owner would rather have it newer and less picturesque. Mill proprietors have seldom any eye for the beauty of weakness or decay. Certainly there are two sides to every question, and probably those artists who so delight in painting dilapidated cottages and ancient half-ruined homes, would not be so enthusiastic about their charms if they had to live in them. We found this windmill to be unique in one respect—as far, that is, as our experience of windmills goes; it being built to face one way only, and not like other mills in such a manner that their sails may be turned to meet the wind from whatever quarter it may come. This peculiar departure from the universal custom proved plainly that the prevailing wind here is from the sea. Indeed, as a native told us, and as the stunted trees all bent inland manifestly showed, “It always does blow in that direction. When it blows in any other, we don’t call it blowing; it’s nothing to talk about.”

We had a long and fairly level stretch of road

for the first few miles out of St. Davids,—a great contrast to our hilly stage in. The country we passed through on the first portion of our way bore a bare, inhospitable, stony look: the hills around were of eccentric shapes,—altogether the prospect was marked by a striking individuality. It is utterly unlike any other part of Great Britain we have ever explored. If the term quaint could rightly be applied to scenery, this truly deserves it.

The farmhouses on the way, which were few and far between, were more remarkable for their solid construction, and for the curious fashion in which the tops of their chimneys were built in a round form, than for their beauty. Still, "beauty is as beauty does," and these substantial farmhouses were well calculated to resist the storm-blasts that sweep unrestrained over this wild unsheltered upland. The wonder is how such unpromising soil can be profitably farmed at all—if it is.

It was, in truth, a hard-featured landscape, with a special character of its own, as severe in look as the countenance of an austere Puritan. Still, it had its own wild charm to a strong mind. It is to the ordinary English country of green fields, trees, and hedgerows, as the "black nor'-easter through the snow-storm hurled" is to the soft summer "sou'-wester," and something more. However, the scenery gradually became less bleak as we proceeded; but as the scenery improved, alas! the road deteriorated and became rough as to surface and hilly as to quality. It was to us an object-lesson of the law of compensation; the

worst of it being that the ups seemed more numerous than the downs. However, a hilly road, though slow to travel, if it leads one through beautiful scenery, is to be preferred to a monotonously level one through a barren waste. Not that even a bleak barren landscape is entirely void of interest to those who have eyes to see, and can appreciate Nature in her sterner aspects; but in time it becomes wearisome on account of its continued sameness. Grandeur is never wearisome; but mere wildness is not of necessity grandeur. The effect of scenery upon the mind of man is very curious. I know some who consider the Scotch Highlands melancholy, and who are actually oppressed by our rugged moorlands, and who call them depressing and dreary. It must be remembered that the love of mountains and uncultivated nature is but of recent growth. Our ancestors frequently applied the term "hateful" to hills, and instead of appreciating their beauty of form, and the play of light and shade on their riven sides, have spoken of them testily as "obstructing the view"! A cultivated man once told me that he considered a century-old oak, with its spreading branches and mighty trunk, more to be admired than all the mountains in the world.

At a small uninteresting hamlet on the way, bearing the not very euphonious title of Croesgoch, we observed by the roadside a large gray weathered stone set upright in a grassy corner. At first we took this to be a rude and overgrown milestone (an article we had not seen for so long that we had

almost forgotten that such a thing existed), but on closer inspection it proved to be a monolith, having a bold but somewhat crude sculpture of a Celtic cross thereon. Of its history I know nothing, nor could I get any enlightenment from a native I questioned, beyond the assurance that "It's ferry old ; it was done by the Druids, indeed!"

By the way, we noted with some surprise how well the Welshmen in this remote corner of their country spoke English,—far better, in our estimation, than their brethren of North Wales, where the Saxon tourist abounds. The only notable thing in their speech is the substitution of "f" for "v," and the way they end most of their sentences with an "indeed"—as a sort of finish, I presume.

It was after Croesgoch that our road became hilly. But from the top of the hills, as some reward for our constant climbing, we had fine views of the sea, and over sparsely wooded glens leading down to it from the mainland; the uplands being still bare and bleak, as though all the vegetation had been swept into the narrow sheltered valleys.

Now began the most puzzling portion of the whole of our journey, as far as the finding of our way was concerned. Roads branched off continually to the right and left of us, and by way of complicated change our road constantly "forked" into two separate ones, each divergence seeming as likely to be the proper one as the other. Our map here quite failed us,—half the roads did not appear to be marked on it. Signposts there were none. When wanted, there never are! The inhabitants

were conspicuous by their absence. Never by any chance was there anybody about of whom to ask the way when we were in doubt. There seldom is; and in this respect untravelled Wales is not peculiar. It is in the vicinity of towns that signposts generally abound, just where there are people about to give the desired information, and the main road is too plainly marked to be readily missed. In the remote country districts, where strangers from afar are few and infrequent, and the local dwellers know every road by heart, signposts are looked upon as unnecessary luxuries. What need of them in an age when everybody travels by rail? In a certain wild district in the North I was assured that it was useless putting any up, for the cottagers simply cut them down in the winter-time for firewood. Whether there were any truth in the story or not I cannot say, but that was the reason given to me by a landlord for the annoying absence, or, at any rate, marked rarity of these useful old-fashioned guides.

More than once we half feared that we had got on to the wrong track,—a serious matter in a wild mountainous district, as the by-ways therein, after growing from bad to worse, but too often eventually lose themselves on the moors, or at the best lead merely to some solitary farmhouse, and go no farther. The only thing thereupon remaining to be done is to hark back to the spot you started from,—not an inspiriting proceeding, especially if you have a heavy stage before you, and your horses show signs of fatigue; still more dispiriting, should the

weather happen to be doubtful. But in travelling by road, as in all other things in this imperfect world, one has to take the rough with the smooth ; fortunately with us the smooth generally prevailed. A good map and the ability to use it will save any serious mistake ; only when your map is not good, "there's the rub."

After driving on for a long time, without sighting a soul, we were delighted when we came upon an old man breaking stones by the wayside, who assured us that we were on the right road for Fishguard ; and furthermore said, " At the top of the hill you will come to some telegraph posts, and they will take you straight there, indeed." We thought the welcome information worth an ounce of tobacco, of which we kept a small supply in the dog-cart, to give away on suitable occasions. For, strange to say, we have found the civil-spoken Welshman, when he is poor, to be proud as well, and at times above receiving gratuities for trifling services, but never above accepting a present of "a little good tobacco from London." It is not a bad idea to take a few ounce packages of this with you when on tour, for presentation on those occasions when money might be refused ; and perhaps a few packages of tea for the womankind. These we did not take, but could have made good use of them had we done so. Such little presents please much, and cost the donor little.

CHAPTER XIV

Fishguard—An old-world town—Goodwic—A Welsh Clovelly—A romantic spot—A French invasion—A tradition—Fishguard Bay—Curious old houses—A landlord's warning—A hilly stage—Weather and scenery—A windy locality—A rainbow—Newport sands—A wreck—A stormy sunset—A modernised castle—An ancient feudal charter.

REACHING the telegraph posts, we followed them along a good road right into romantic Fishguard, or at least, if the town itself cannot fairly claim that appellation, its situation most assuredly can. About a mile or so before we reached our destination, we had, from our elevated road, a charming view of Fishguard straggling up and down a deep ravine that opened out towards the sea, with its spacious hill-enclosed harbour beyond, and wild gray line of coast still farther away. It was one of the most romantic and unexpected of the many scenic surprises we had during our journey.

Fishguard is an old town, and, if the truth must be told, an odorous one as well; it smells of the sea, and many other things besides,—at least it did that day: of tar and fish, and—but I will not enumerate. In spite of its numerous odours (which, judging from the hardy appearance of the Fishguard folk, whatever they may be are not unhealthy), the

curious, rambling place pleased us exceedingly : it was such an old-fashioned, oddly-built town, it had such a rare old-world flavour about it, it was so delightfully unsophisticated.

Like St. Davids, Fishguard is far removed from the iron way. It has a sober, steady-going look, as though content to remain what it is, neither growing rich, nor yet getting poor, but flourishing in a quiet way. It is one of those tranquil, unprogressive, but not retrograde towns—out of the busy world of competitive commerce, and out of the beaten track of tourists—that seem to remain much the same from generation to generation.

Having secured quarters at the best hotel in the place, where we were made very comfortable, and after having very satisfactorily “refreshed the inner man,” as country newspaper reporters are fond of remarking, we set out to inspect the town and its fine natural surroundings. First of all we took a stroll of nearly two miles to the picturesque little fishing hamlet of Goodwic, an attractive spot, with a number of cottages climbing the steep and wooded hillside above the sea,—a rare blending of the rural and marine.

As Solva reminded us somewhat of Boscastle in Cornwall, so Goodwic reminded us of Clovelly in Devon. For, like Clovelly, Goodwic struggles down the cliff-side, and has a primitive stone pier below ; the close resemblance of two almost unique spots is singular, and it is seldom that one finds two such romantically situated scenes as Goodwic and Fishguard in immediate proximity.

It was near here that the famous landing of the French occurred in 1797,—three frigates in February of that year making a descent upon the bay, conveying in all 1500 men. The ships having come to anchor, disembarked this small force, who immediately set to work to plunder the district, and by the evening the majority of the force got so intoxicated as to be beyond the control of their officers. For some unexplained reason the frigates sailed away, and the next day the Frenchmen surrendered to Lord Cawdor, who, at the head of a hastily-collected body of militia, about half the strength of the enemy, had gone forth to oppose them. Tradition has it that the invaders were alarmed at the sight of a number of Welshwomen who had assembled on the heights around to witness the expected battle. The Welshwomen, clad in red cloaks, then commonly worn by their class, were mistaken by the French for a body of regular troops advancing to surround them. So ended a notable *fiasco*.

Returning to Fishguard, we spent the rest of the evening wandering about the queer old town. How shall I describe Fishguard? It is a place to be seen, but not to be readily described, for its quaint originality almost baffles description. It would require at least a whole chapter and half-a-dozen illustrations to do it anything approaching justice. But space forbids; I can only therefore briefly attempt to give our impression of the place. Half the town stands on a hill, the other half at the bottom of it by an inlet of the sea. A very steep

GOODWIC HARBOUR



bit of road, nasty for driving down, as we discovered afterwards, leads from one to the other. At the commencement of this descent a most picturesque view of the quaint old town below is obtained, with its irregularly built and roofed houses, and its rough stone pier jutting out into the water of the bay. Looking in the other direction inland, one has a charming prospect up a deep wooded glen, down which the little river Gwaen glides, or rather tumbles, to the sea. This stream is crossed by an ancient stone bridge which connects the two portions of the town—the upper and lower Fishguard, as they are called.

The old, rambling, and picturesquely dirty town below, with its collection of quaint houses gathered together by the quay-side; the great landlocked bay, guarded by two mighty headlands; the wooded glen, backed by rugged mountains; the rushing river; the century-old bridge; together with the sturdy brown fishing boats with their red sails and tangled netting, and sundry other small nondescript craft anchored about or on shore, formed as effective a picture as could be imagined,—far more delightful to look upon than any painting that ever graced or disgraced the walls of the Academy; far more eye-pleasing than any artist's dream on canvas, dream he ever so cunningly. Picturesque reality is always more beautiful than invented romance, though romance may at times be more beautiful than commonplace fact. But why paint the commonplace? Art was not given us for that.

Again I throw out a well-intentioned hint, gratis,

to any artist in search of new motives and the unhackneyed picturesque. Let him pack up his tools and kit and come to Fishguard, and he will not be disappointed. There is enough "good stuff" (as the professional slang has it) in the place and its surroundings to last any painter a lifetime, paint he ever so diligently; and as far as I know, it is untouched ground.

Returning to the upper town, we noticed a curious old house built ever so many years ago, that both interested and amused us. This was provided with a step-ladder outside as apparently the only means of access to the upper story. This ladder was fitted with ropes and chains, manifestly to pull it up by after mounting. It appeared as though this primitive building had no internal staircase. Surely this arrangement is as quaint as anything to be found in Nuremberg or elsewhere on the Continent. Fishguard might well be foreign but for its situation! Another house had a stone stairway outside. This reminds me that we slept one night on a former journey at a romantic solitary country inn, since, alas! altered and improved,—in the landlord's estimation that is, not in mine. At this genuine old-fashioned hostel we gained our bedchamber by an external staircase of stone, unprovided with any shelter from the weather. Truly it happened to be both fine and very warm at the time, and so we enjoyed the novelty of approaching our room thus oddly; but possibly, had it been wet or cold, we should not have been so delighted with the quaint arrangement.

"A delightful anyhowish-built sort of a town," was my wife's summing-up of Fishguard. "A place once seen not easily to be forgotten," was mine.

The next morning was not a propitious one on which to resume our journey; the sky was darkly overcast, the wind blew gustily, large drops of rain fell now and again, the weather-vane on the ancient town-hall (consisting of a sword-fish) veered round in turns to every point of the compass. The prospect was not encouraging,—nor was the barometer, for it was falling steadily.

We waited over mid-day, in the faint hope that things might improve, but no improvement came, and we had almost made up our minds not to proceed farther, when the landlord approached us and said, "You surely won't think of venturing on farther this weather; there'll be a heavy storm afore long, and your road is a very bleak and exposed one. A coach was blown over on it one winter. Besides, you'll get wet through if you go. Better stay where you are; the weather may improve by to-morrow."—"But suppose it does not?" we replied. "Then stay on till it does; I suppose you are in no hurry. We'll make you comfortable." Now this decided us to go, not owing to any feeling that the good-natured landlord's advice was self-interested in wishing to keep us over another night, though of course it might have been, but wholly, I believe, because we did not like any one to imagine that we could not brave the weather and the bleak road. Had we not on other expeditions driven over some of the wildest moors in Britain, over

some of the roughest tracks that ever were dignified by the title of highway, and that in the face of a blinding storm; and had we not, even in a way, enjoyed the experience? Why therefore should we be deterred now by a landlord's warning of possible evils? Besides, when you are once on the way, things never seem half so bad as the thinking about it. Face an enemy boldly and you are on the road to conquer. It is the old story of grasping a nettle tenderly and being stung for your pains.

So, wisely or not, about three o'clock we ordered the horses to be put to, and set out on our short though hard stage of seven miles to Newport. Seven hilly miles across as wild a bit of country in parts as any we had experienced during the journey, and the hills at starting, down and up from Fishguard, ran those long-to-be-remembered ones in and out of Solva very close for steepness and badness, though I think that the Solva ones had a trifling advantage in those undesirable qualities, and must in honesty be awarded first place, the Fishguard productions coming a good second.

Just as we were starting, a weak gleam of sunshine struggled out of the watery sky, and we felt quite inspirited, even venturing to smile at the landlord's final warning. But the gleam did not last long,—just long enough, however, to give a sort of *éclat* to our departure. Angry-looking clouds quickly again obscured the sky, so that we did not deem it wise to remove our mackintoshes. We kept them on to keep the rain off, on the

principle that if you go for a walk on a doubtful day with an umbrella, it never rains; but if you trust to its goodwill, and merely take your walking-stick with you, it is sure to pour. I am glad to say that the wearing of the mackintoshes was effectual, for it did not rain anything to hurt till we reached Newport, and were safely housed in our hotel; but afterwards, as if to make up for lost time, it poured in torrents, as though a second Deluge were about to commence. But I am anticipating.

Very shortly after leaving Fishguard we found ourselves in a wild country composed chiefly of crags and boulder-strewn moors, with a serrated, barren range of mountains to bound the gloomy outlook; dreary enough, doubtless, on a sunny summer day, but doubly dreary now owing to the brooding sky above. A desolate scene it was. Just such a one as Salvator Rosa delighted to depict as a suitable background for his brigands. Fortunately for the driving tourist, Britain is free from such undesirable characters, and the highwayman is out of date. A driving tour in the good old times, when the knights of the road flourished, was pregnant with possible adventure. It would be quite an exciting episode to be chased by one of these gentlemen over a forsaken moorland road such as ours that memorable stage. We were not sorry that the days of Dick Turpin were over, otherwise, during our many wanderings, one of his brethren might have given us trouble.

It was, in truth, a desolate country we passed through,—wild even for wild Wales. It was beyond

the power of the patches of purple heather and golden gorse that were sprinkled sparingly on portions of the barren upland to brighten or enliven the dreary prospect, which, however, had a certain sort of charm for us. How the wind did blow and howl eerily amongst the crags, how it whistled as it swept by us. High up in the world as we were, without shelter or protection of any kind, we felt the full force of the blast. It was as much as we could do to make headway at all ; but nevertheless we enjoyed the bracing breezes (perhaps over-strong for delicate people, but a grand tonic for those in health), and we rejoiced rather than otherwise in battling with adverse circumstances. Our life in the open air all day long had made us feel fit to face and brave anything almost. There is nothing so good for the nerves as being out in the open,—in fact, we had forgotten that we were possessed of any.

A stormy day when the clouds are travelling fast overhead, and the wild winds blow of their own sweet will, and all is gray and solemn and gloomy, has its attractions for a manly mind. There is a beauty in gloom as well as in soft sunshine ; indeed, grand mountain scenery is never so impressive viewed in the glory of sunlight as when beheld under the gray gloom of a stormy sky.

He who would know the fell,
The gorse, the heather,
Must love the storm as well
As sunny weather.

I may be wrong, but I have come to the

conclusion that it can blow a good deal harder, when it chooses, in this corner of Wales than in any other portion of Britain. I would even bet odds (were I a betting man) on the superior strength and savageness of the "sou'-westers" here over those anywhere else within the four seas that encircle our wind-swept island. There is a jocular saying at St. Davids that the cathedral was built in a hollow, because the monks knew that if they built it on a hill it would be blown down. I forget how many tons of lead, even sheltered comparatively as it is, the clerk there told me he had seen blown right off the cathedral roof on to the ground below one stormy winter day.

As we drove slowly along in the teeth of the gale, we obtained now and again between the crags to our left a glorious panorama of the tossing tempestuous sea, foam-flecked to the high horizon, and the two bold headlands of Pen Caer and Dinas. It was a grand sight, even far away and elevated as we were, to observe the great waves racing furiously along towards the land, and dashing against the feet of the rocky promontories, lashing themselves into a white rage as they leapt up the steep rocks, ever falling back again broken and defeated. A small ship, wisely keeping well away from shore, was pitching uneasily about, a mere speck in the angry waste of waters, her reefed sails bulging in the blast. That little vessel excited our admiration, for did she not represent one of the many triumphs of man over savage Nature?

Approaching Newport, the scenery took upon

itself a softer aspect. At one point we had an almost pretty peep (in contrast to the barren grandeur of the rest of our stage) of a rocky glen leading down to the sea, with some stunted trees and one or two clean-looking, whitewashed cottages therein. Shortly after this Newport Bay opened out finely before us. For a few moments once more the sun struggled out of the clouds, and a gorgeous rainbow spanned the sky in front of us. The sight was a lovely one, though before we had time to admire it the semicircle of many-hued light vanished and a cold world of gray took its place. Then we called to mind the olden rhyme: "A rainbow at night is a shepherd's delight; a rainbow in the morning is a shepherd's warning," and we took it as a fore-herald of better weather,—not that these wise saws are always to be implicitly trusted, for there is another saying that must surely be the parent or child of this one, that red at night and in the morning are respectively the shepherd's delight and the reverse. But I have sometimes known very red sunsets in mountain lands followed by drenching days; yellow sunsets, however, especially if long wisp-like clouds lie about the horizon, are, according to my experience, certain forerunners of windy weather. But away from the disturbing influences of the sea and hills, these old sayings as to sunsets and rainbows overnight and in the morning are, on the whole, not bad criterions of the coming weather. I regret to say I do not know so much about sunrises, not having witnessed or studied them

so frequently; and, let the early getters-up say what they will, a sunset, as a rule, is a far finer sight than a sunrise, which is feeble, colourless, and characterless in comparison.

Newport is a small town of no pretensions to importance or the picturesque, but it is pleasantly situated, and has the advantage of the sea on one hand, and a lovely country, nestled amongst hills, on the other. We had hardly got safely here within shelter of our hotel before down came the rain in right earnest. We had no view from our room but of the opposite houses of the street and some stables, and after a time wearying of the intensely uninteresting and limited prospect, we donned our waterproofs and ventured out, for the weather had improved somewhat; not that it was much to boast of, but at any rate the rain did not come down in quite such merciless torrents.

First we wended our way down to the shore. Doubtless the few inhabitants who saw us tramping in the wet, clad in our mackintoshes, deemed us curious folk, if they did not consider that we were half mad; but we had become so accustomed to the fresh air, that we simply could not stand being cooped up the whole evening indoors,—there would be time enough and to spare when the darkness set in to post up our diary, touch up sketches, or write letters.

The sea-shore looked dismal enough when we reached it, given over to gulls and ourselves, but from what we saw we judged that it would appear very different in fine weather. This is the picture

we had before us, quite a study in water-colours, as I facetiously remarked. A long wan reach of sandy shore, damp and reflective, the tide was far out, but we could hear the waves wailing mournfully on the harbour bar, the white line they made emphasised by the dark gray sky above. On either hand two rocky headlands loomed up grandly, but indistinctly, through the mist of driving rain. Close by the shore were some low stone cottages, protected from the sea by a rough stone wall of rounded boulders. These cottages might possibly appear picturesque under other circumstances, but just then everything looked dismally wet. Some deserted lime-kilns and a ruined mill added to the desolate feeling of the deserted shore, and gave a quaintness to the prospect, for who would expect to find a mill on the sands by the sea? An old stranded hulk, with broken masts and weed-grown timbers, that was reflected darkly in a large pool left by the receding tide, gave a suggestion of poetry to the wild scene; the wreck was at any rate in keeping with the windy sky, the stormy sea, and the plaintive cry of the wandering gulls. Farther away there were a few fishing smacks resting on the sands—high and dry, I was about to say, only the term dry seems scarcely applicable! A rusty old anchor, an ancient superannuated buoy, and some slippery rocks, green with slimy seaweed, completed the dreary picture; yet it did not seem so dreary to us, as the deserted parade of a fashionable watering-place on a wet day.

Then as we stood there thinking what next we

should do, and wondering to ourselves whether after all a dry room, even with no view, was not better than standing in the wet seeing nothing in particular, suddenly,—so suddenly indeed as to be almost startling,—a complete change took place in the weather. First came a suspicion of yellow on the sands, when looking up we saw a bright gleam of light breaking through a rift in the dun-coloured clouds, then another rift appeared, and another, till at last the round, red sun himself was revealed, with flying fragments of torn vapours around. What a transformation scene—the world of dreary gray had become a world of glowing colour! The golden rays of the sun tinged with a burning red the great gray rain-clouds above, and edged those nearest to him with a fiery fringe of gold, and a feeling of warmth and cheerfulness was diffused over the whole prospect that but a few moments ago was so dark and dreary and sombre. The sea too caught the glowing glories from above, and the tips of the waves were as though touched with liquid gold. The old weather-worn wreck became darkly outlined against the gleaming water, and long blue-gray shadows crept along the sands; the wind from off the sea blew chilly; the sun was sinking fast behind a low bank of clouds; the transient beauties of the stormy evening were fading away, and we thought it time to return to the despised comforts and shelter of our inn. These wonderful and rapid changes of weather that sometimes occur in Wales, as in other mountain and sea-girt lands, are impressive by their suddenness, and strangely effective

by their sharp transitions from gray gloom to bright glory or the reverse. In such countries the beauties of the skyscape contend with those of the landscape; the mountains attract the clouds, and seem, as it were, to join earth and sky together. In a flat country you get a far greater extent of sky, but somehow it does not seem so near you; the connecting link of mountain peak is lost—its summit in the clouds, its foot by your side. In Wales, as regards weather, you never know what a day or an hour may bring forth. And in this very uncertainty lies a peculiar charm; for if the morning turn out unpropitious you have some reason to hope for better things at any time, but if the weather be good, you are content, and do not trouble about the future.

As we wended our way back, in passing along the main street of the little town, we noticed some cows standing quietly there, right in the middle of the roadway, being milked, as though it were quite a usual proceeding. Such a primitive though picturesque sight we had not observed before in any place dignified with the name of town, however remote. Making a slight detour whilst the fast-fading daylight lasted, we passed close under the remains of the old feudal castle that once belonged to the Lords of Kemes, or Cemars, which stands on a height overlooking the town. The ancient castle is now converted into a modern residence, and the large windows of plate glass let into the massive Norman masonry grated upon our sense of harmony, like the striking of a discordant note in a well-known air. A flag was flying from the

top of the still frowning keep, that showed a dark mass against the darkening sky, and in the uncertain light of the gathering gloom we felt that with small strain on our faculties for romancing we could for a moment cheat Time, and in imagination step backwards long eventful centuries and picture ourselves as wayfarers in the undesirable feudal times. But I am sadly trespassing on the realm of fancy ; let us back to historic fact.

This castle of Newport was originally built by a Norman adventurer, who in the eleventh century landed with his gathering in Fishguard Bay, and filched by his sword an independent territory from the Princes of Wales ; and who, the better to secure his conquest, raised a strong and stately castle here, wherein he held his court,—and possibly, as Norman robbers went, he was not a bad man. In our little hostel that evening we discovered a copy of a charter which one of his descendants granted in 1215 to the town of Newport (which by the way he calls Newburgh). As this document appeared to us of considerable interest, throwing a curious side-light as it does upon the condition of life in the feudal days, we carefully copied it, which copy I have reproduced here in modern English. I think that this draft of a feudal deed over six centuries old is of more than ordinary interest. This then is it :—

Know ye present and to come that I Nicholas, son of William Fitz Martin, Lord of Kemes, have given and granted, and by this my Charter have confirmed to my Burgesses of Newburgh all the Liberties and Customs underwritten which William Fitz Martin my Father to

the same did grant and give: that is to say—They shall have the common of pasture in my land and common, in the water from the Fosse which encloses the Town Eastwards to the sea, and Easement of wood for their houses and buildings, and for firing, by view of the Forester. Likewise if a Burgess dies of what death soever, unless by Judgment for Felony he shall lose his life, I will have nothing of his Chattels but his relief, to wit, Twelve Pence. Likewise if a Burgess delivers up any of his cattle (in charge) to any one, and the same is judged guilty of Felony or Robbery, or shall lose his cattle, the Burgess by good and lawful men may prove his cattle and have them. Likewise if any Burgess have hired land from any Freeman, and that Freeman will infringe thereon, I ought to distrain the Debtors of the Burgesses of whom they have such things, and call witnesses and make them render their debts. Likewise a Burgess accused of any Forfeiture, may be repledged by his neighbours. Likewise they ought to have a Bailiff and a Common Council for Me and Them. Likewise no Foreign merchant may buy or sell out of my Borough of Newburgh. Likewise a Burgess accused of Felony or Robbery, if he calls upon me, I am to defend him, and take upon me to enable him to make a good Defence. Likewise the Burgesses shall not be bound to go in the Army, unless as the Burgesses of Pembroke do. Likewise with the aforesaid Liberties I have granted to them all the liberties and good customs of Pembroke, all which said liberties I have granted and confirmed to them and their Heirs to be holden and had of me and of my Heirs freely, and Entirely, and Peaceably; and that this my Donation, and Grant, and Confirmation, may be firm and steadfast for ever, to this Charter and Confirmation I have put my seal. These being Witnesses—

JOHN DE ARUNDELL

JORDAN DE CANTITON

ROBERT FITZ OWEN

WILLIAM, son of GWRWARED the Constable—

with many others. Truly an interesting document, and, for the times, showing a liberal spirit on the part of my Lord of Kemes.

CHAPTER XV

Welsh rivers—Picturesque Nevern—Primitive ways—A runic relic
—Over the moors—Novel wall-building—A notable panorama
—Kilgerran Castle—Sleepy Cardigan—The valley of the Teifi
—A Paradise Lost—Llechrhyd—A salmon-leap—Cenarth—A
spot to be remembered—Newcastle-Emlyn—Spoiling scenery
—A land of castles—Weather prophets.

WE resumed our journey on a fine cloudy morning; the air was delightfully fresh and clear after the storm and wind of overnight, and the distance had that near blue appearance seen only after recent rain. It was a perfect day for the road, though at first the going was rather heavy; but, thoughtful of our horses, we moderated our pace, in spite of the fact that we had a long stage before us, as we intended to sleep the night at Newcastle-Emlyn, baiting at Cardigan.

At first we had a level stretch of road, but as usual this desirable condition of things did not last long. Then we had a hill to mount, from the top of which, looking backwards, we obtained a fine panoramic view of Newport, with its sheltered bay, and modernised castle, beyond which was a confused wilderness of hills. Ahead the country appeared beautifully wooded, which promised pleasant wanderings. Then a long easy

descent brought us to a lovely spot, where an old ivy-covered bridge spanned a little river that leaped and foamed over its rocky bed with a melodious gurgling and splashing. These Welsh rivers always delight me, not only for their natural picturesqueness, but also for the absolute clearness and apparent purity of their water. Unlike lowland streams, owing to the rocky nature of the country they pass through, these mountain rivers are not contaminated with mud or other suspended matter, and their boulder and pebbly beds do not encourage a growth of entangling weeds.

Looking up and down the wooded valley from the bridge, a perfect picture of falling water and tree-clad banks was presented to our gaze, and in the quiet pools below we caught sight of more than one speckled inhabitant, head up stream, on the outlook for fallen flies, or other such trifling luxuries. What a sight for a fisherman! for the trout were plump and plentiful. But these little fishful streams have one drawback to the enthusiastic angler: their thick overhanging woods, however charming pictorially, are apt to entangle his line, and cause a loss of time and temper. No; the ideal water of a "trouter" is an open moorland stream, with deep and frequent pools, so that he may throw his cast whither he will, without the danger and worry of it being caught in brambles or spreading branches.

Just over the bridge we came to Nevern, one of the most picturesque villages imaginable, embossed in shady trees and fruitful orchards,

with soft green meadows around, and sheltered by gentle sloping hills. Could Nevern be transferred to the heart of leafy, lovely Devonshire, I do not think that it would suffer by the contrast with the beauties of even the "fairest county in England." It is true, when thinking of the pleasing impression the place made upon us, a due allowance must be given for the fact that we saw it after long wandering through a bleak and barren, albeit grand and impressive, country; but I have endeavoured to take this into just consideration.

The church at Nevern is a venerable structure, gray with age, and in keeping with its picturesque location. By the churchyard gateway, where it opened on to the road, we noticed some stone steps for the convenience of the members of the congregation who rode to service from afar. These steps were charmingly suggestive of old-world ways, and of the poetic aspect of remote country life. I well remember, in passing through just such another primitive and out-of-the-way hamlet one Sunday morning, noting that there were two or three old horses ready saddled, standing hitched to a post that stood there for that purpose, outside the churchyard wall.

In the peaceful God's-acre here we discovered an ancient Runic cross, or at least what we took to be such, from its resemblance to certain so-called Runic crosses in other parts of the country. This Nevern cross is an exceedingly fine specimen of its kind, being, we judged, about fifteen feet in height, with a raised (not depressed) pattern upon

it of intricate and interlacing scroll-work, with the addition of some illegible characters. This old prehistoric monolith, besides being weather-worn with the exposure to the storms of centuries, was much lichen-stained and moss-encrusted,—still, to learned antiquaries it may have a tale to tell.

Now our road followed the winding bank of the river for a short way, and then began a long toilsome mount, with a deep, dark, thickly wooded glen to the right, and a series of crags to the left. We could hear the sound of falling water far below us, but could not get a sight of it for the thick spreading foliage. The climb ended, we found ourselves on the top of a vast extending upland, from which we had a magnificent panorama of gray moorlands stretching away to a distance of purple mountains.

Once more the country assumed a bleak, wild aspect, but the bracing air of the uplands was simply life-giving, and for this alone we would not willingly have exchanged our stage over the almost treeless waste for a less ambitious one through a soft land of pastoral delights. After all, it little matters how bleak and barren a landscape may be, so long as the mind is in tune with it; and the constant change of scenery one has on a driving tour of any extent, from the softly sylvan to the wildly grand, is agreeably refreshing because of its variety.

The sky-effects that day were very noticeable, as is frequently the case during the clearing up after stormy weather. Now and again soft

silvery mists would wreath themselves amongst the rugged summits of the mountain peaks, coiling and intertwining amongst themselves in a strange fantastic manner, ever changing shapes, till at last they would vanish into thin air. Then some mighty clouds would descend in a majesty of white upon the mountains, completely obliterating the distance for a time; then in turn these would sweep along, leaving scattered detachments behind upon the highest points of the long mountain range. These wandering mists and drifting clouds give the charm of mystery to the mountains, and thereby add vastly to their impressiveness. Mountains require clouds to set off their grandeur and beauty; they need them as much as does the sky above, for who would not soon tire of a cloudless sky?

Except for the distant views, so space-expressing on account of the long range of moorland and mountain spread out before us, our road possessed no other scenic attractions worthy of mention. The rough fields and rocky pastures on either hand were fenced in with rude stone walls, their long monotony of winding parallels being broken here and there by a few stunted, wind-blown trees, some ragged brambles, and the ever-hardy gorse, whose special province seems to be to brighten up these dreary moorlands, and make the waste places of the earth cheerful with colour. What a glorious plant is the gorse! growing and flourishing on the poorest land, in bloom all the year round, and absolutely glowing with colour. I am afraid it is too common with us to be valued at its true

worth. Were I the fortunate possessor of a country garden, I would make it gay with golden gorse and broom and heather, if I could get it to grow, and let the foreign rhododendron and other exotic shrubs seek a home somewhere else.

In portions of our road we noticed that the walls were built of thin stones placed herring-bone fashion, just as the early Romans sometimes built their walls. Why this curious departure from the now prevailing way of laying stone upon stone horizontally, I cannot say; but it would be interesting to learn, then one might perchance understand the reason of the early builders adopting this form. We presumed that there was some special purpose in employing this antiquated manner of construction here. The tourist by road, if he keeps his eyes open, may find much food for reflection wherever he goes.

At last, after several miles of dreary driving along our elevated road, we came to a steep and winding descent which took us into Cardigan. At the top of this we had another of the many scenic revelations that our journey so abounded in; but, alas! I feel how weak are words (and most of all any words of mine) to do anything like justice to the glorious prospect of wide sea and bold headland, of wooded glen and gleaming river, of blue mountain and purple moorland, of gray castle and sunny plain, that was presented to our delighted gaze. Mere adjectives will not describe scenery, and before such panoramas of excelling loveliness and grandeur both pen and

pencil are powerless. Still, as even a childish attempt to draw a house is more like a building than blank paper, so a poor and feeble attempt is better than none,—therefore I will try my hand.

High before us was the vast expanse of the sea, sparkling in the sunlight (for seaward the sun was shining now), its gleaming waters dotted with ships, that so far away seemed motionless. Right down below us, just where the river Teifi widens out into a broad and sandy estuary, stood remote Cardigan, looking in the distance very romantic (its romantic appearance, however, diminished somewhat on a nearer approach, but that did not affect its value in the view). The much-indented line of the coast stretched miles away till lost in the far-off blue. Along this we could easily trace a parallel line of white where the waves were breaking. Above Cardigan stood boldly out two jutting, rocky headlands, between which the Teifi flows, to lose its tiny flood in the all-absorbing sea. Looking inland, the distance was composed of dark blue, finely shaped mountains, emerging into spreading moors; then came a valley of many-tinted woods and fresh green fields; and right through the heart of this sylvan and pastoral land wound the silvery Teifi, gleaming in the light, leading the eye from beauty to beauty, and brightening up the prospect. From our vantage height we

traced the track
Of the sea-seeking river back,
Glistening for miles above its mouth,
Through the long valley to the south;

And looking westward, cool to view,
Stretched the illimitable blue.

. . . In the north,
Dim through their misty lair looked forth
The space-dwarfed mountains to the sea,
From mystery to mystery.

We had also a fine view of Kilgerran Castle, that showed the only dark spot in the lovely landscape, as though no sun could lighten up its age-gathered gloom. Was it in black, we wondered, for unrecorded evil deeds done within its walls long years ago? Could stones but speak, what secrets might not those of Kilgerran's ancient castle reveal! The ruins crown the top of a high, precipitous cliff that rises boldly above the Teifi. All around are sloping wooded banks; the crag and castle alone are bare. Very striking was the contrast of stern rock and dark ruin with the soft, tender foliage on either side, and the bright gleaming of the rapid river below.

It is rarely that a prospect is so picturesquely perfect as the one we had before us that day, or which abounds in so great a variety. Where you have mountains you do not always have the sea. Here we had a glorious combination of many things, such a combination that I have no recollection of having come upon the like before in all our travels at home or abroad. Let me recapitulate: we had before us the open sea, a winding river, and a wide estuary, bold headlands, and a fine coast panorama; a wonderful mingling of mountain, hill, and moorland, of wooded height and pastoral valley, with

a picturesque old town—in the distance at any rate—and a gray old historic ruined castle, to add a human interest to the scene; and if that feast of good things is not enough to satisfy the most exacting lover of country beauty and landscape loveliness, I know not what more he could reasonably expect, or have—all at one time. Possibly any single part of the prospect taken alone might be excelled elsewhere, but where in all Great Britain, or out of it, will you find a prospect combining in itself so many good things? I know not what else could be there but a lake and a waterfall; and the latter we actually had in a small way, tumbling down a deep, leafy glen close at hand.

After having rested long eye-delighted with the beauty of the grand and varied view, remembering that our day's stage was not half completed, we reluctantly began our long descent into Cardigan, where we stayed two hours to bait and rest our horses, not neglecting our own requirements. After calling at the post-office for letters, we spent our spare hour after lunch in "doing" the town,—not that there was much to "do" there.

Cardigan struck us as being a dull little town, with an astonishing number of small inns,—certainly not a picturesque place in any way; its best friends could not say that of it, nor yet is it ugly, but simply uninteresting, like a number of worthy people in this world, doubtless most estimable citizens, but who notwithstanding are without any special individuality or character. Now in this humdrum world it is a great relief from the monotony of

uniformity to come upon a person or a place of some character. St. Davids and Fishguard abounded in this quality, and therefore charmed us exceedingly. Like those two places, Cardigan is finely situated, but unlike them it has a railway. At last we had come upon the track and sound of the iron horse, only, however, to leave it again. It is not easy in these days, when the land is gridironed all over with railways, to drive for forty-nine continuous miles, as we did, from Haverfordwest to Cardigan, out of sight of the fussy locomotive, and out of hearing of its shrill whistle. We felt proud of the feat. A future generation may not be able to do the like.

It appeared to us that the best thing about this sleepy town was its fine and ancient stone bridge over the river, which the builders of old thoughtfully provided with ample recesses on either side, for the benefit and safety of foot-passengers. In these recesses one may stand and admire the view in peace (when there is one to admire) without the danger of being run over by careless drivers or jostled by passing pedestrians.

From the centre of the bridge certainly the most effective view of the place is to be had; the gray clustering houses forming a good background to the quiet flowing river and shipping thereon. Cardigan is a port, it has a railway terminus, it is not merely "on the line," and yet it is the most uncommercial town imaginable. Looking down on the Teifi, we noticed that its waters had a very blue tint, very unusual to a river that flows through

a town, and doubtless due to the purity of the stream ; so clear indeed was it that we could see the stones at the bottom. Very different from the Thames at London, or the Mersey at Liverpool ; it would puzzle any one to see to the bottom of those rivers !

At Cardigan there are the ruins of a castle that has had a stormy history, but which now in its old age is peacefully crumbling to dust. Wales is the country *par excellence* of castles and chapels ; they are indeed so common that one becomes in time a little tired of them, especially the chapels, which are of the ugly, ugly.

From Cardigan on to Newcastle - Emlyn, a distance of ten miles, our road led us along the lovely vale of the Teifi ; and a more charming valley is not to be found in all Great Britain. It is in truth a dream of scenery, a Paradise Lost to the majority of worthy Britons who know every country but their own. Such a happy blending of rock, river, wood, green pasture, gliding and tumbling water, with peeps now and again of faint-blue, far-away hills, seldom falls to the lot of the traveller in search of the picturesque. Doubly beautiful to us seemed the soft, restful valley, bathed in the warm noon sunshine, after our bleak moorland experiences and the wild rugged coast around St. Davids. It was a drive to make one thankful for the loveliness of the land. How many tourists, I wonder, have discovered this valley of delight ? Stay, that is not quite a fair question, for does not the modern tourist, busy with many things, leave

it to his guide-book to tell him where to go, and what to see, and how to see it, even carefully pointing out the proper points of view, with full and precise information what he is to admire, and what not to admire?

The first village we came to on our way, according to our map, was Llechrhyd. (How it is pronounced I am sure I do not know, but this did not matter, as we had not to ask our way there; otherwise, I fear that we should never have made a Welshman understand us.) Anyway it is a very pretty spot, set deep in shady woods. Here the Teifi is crossed by one of those charming old stone bridges that are so specially characteristic of Wales. This was overgrown with ivy in parts, and the whole structure was repeated, arch for arch, stone for stone, tint for tint, in the glassy flood below. The Welshmen of the past knew how to build bridges, both substantially and gracefully; and somehow these bridges always seem to cross a river at its prettiest part. Why this is I cannot say, but we have invariably found such to be the case. Wherever there is an *old* bridge in Wales, there is sure to be a picture. I put old purposely in italics, as there are a few new bridges in Wales that are not notable for beauty, though they may be convenient.

Onward from Llechrhyd our road took a grand horse-shoe bend, right at the foot of a tree-clad hill. The river now wound in and out with many a graceful curve through rich green meadows to our right,—in its whole course there was not a single straight line that engineers love so well, and painters

hate still more. What a peculiar attraction there is about a winding river; it leads the eye far away into the very heart of the landscape till it loses itself in the dreamy distance. There are always, too, signs of life about a river, even in the loneliest districts,—the fisherman loves it as much as the artist; so do the birds; cattle come down to drink of its waters, or stand lazily cooling themselves therein; its banks are ever fresh and green, even in the driest summers; and however far inland the traveller may be, it seems somehow to bring him in touch with the distant sea, for all rivers lead eventually thither.

Then as we drove on we came to Cenarth, where there is a fine salmon-leap, for the Teifi is not only a most beautiful stream, but a fishful one. Cenarth is certainly a most romantic spot,—a spot to be remembered. At it the river runs through a narrow wooded gorge, then rushes impetuously over some bold rocks, making a grand cascade, up which in season the big fish jump on their way from the sea to the higher waters, a sight to behold. And to complete this ready-made picture, on some rocks beside the fall stands an old, gray, time-toned mill—just where an artist would have placed it.

Not only is the scenery here remarkable because of the beauty of the curving forms of the falling water, the graceful sweep of the foliage, the fine shape of the weather and water-worn rocks, and the varied outline of the distant hills, but for its wonderful colouring. The river is a silvery blue-gray in the light,—a colour difficult to put into

words, and too bright for paint ; a deep, dark green in the quiet pools beneath the overhanging woods ; and where it glides over the rocks, a rich, tawny, translucent yellow ; a sparkling white where it flashes and foams as it falls. The boulders, too, in the stream are of a delicious cool green and purple-gray, and the rocks above are many-hued with creeping lichen. The tints of the trees are varied according to their kind (a glory in the autumn-time) ; and the grassy banks are of a luxuriant green. What a country Wales is for colour ! and how beloved of artist, since David Cox discovered its picturesque qualities.

Just below the leap, the Teifi is crossed by another of the frequent and ever-charming Welsh bridges. And whether the bridge and its backing of dark woods, the falls and gorge beyond, or the quiet stretches of the river below the cascade, where it meanders through green and treeful meadows, is the most beautiful, it is hard to say. At Cenarth, look which way you will, you have a picture before you. The camera here had one advantage over the pencil, for by its aid we were enabled to take a dozen pretty photographs whilst we had only time to secure one sketch, though, I must confess, I would not exchange that single sketch for all the photographs ; for at the best, even when used with brains, the lens gives but an unfeeling, unsatisfactory, mechanical reproduction of a scene. It cannot put poetry into it,—that artist's self which he unconsciously instils into his work, and which makes us admire a David Cox, a Linnell, a

SALMON LEAP, CENARTH



Creswick, a Leader, and countless other famous and unfamed landscapists, for their individuality. Their pictures are not mere transcripts from Nature, they possess something of the soul of the man who painted them. There are some people in the world whose eyes are so untrained as to be unable to see the beauties of a scene until an artist has translated it for them on paper or on canvas.

A few miles now of hilly road, that led us through shady woods, brought us to Newcastle-Emlyn, a very picturesquely situated and quaintly-built little town that stands pleasantly on the banks of the Teifi. After having secured rooms at the old-fashioned inn there, as an hour or more of daylight was left to us, we set out to explore the place and its immediate surroundings. Walking down to the old bridge, we noticed sorrowfully that the river, which comes grandly down at the spot over its rock-strewn bed, was quite spoilt by a quantity of posts fixed in it, with pulleys on the tops of them, and from post to post stretched long lines of wires. A more effectual way of spoiling a fine bit of river scenery could hardly be devised. The sight puzzled us. Asking a native the meaning of it all, we learnt that the wires conveyed the motive power from some hidden turbines placed in the stream to the town, for the purpose of corn-grinding, chaff-cutting, and the like. And so for money-making the river in a scenic sense was ruined. It certainly was enough to vex the soul of any lover of the beautiful to see such a charming prospect spoilt. Gold is the root of half the ugliness

in the world. Without those horrid posts and wires, this stretch of the Teifi would have been almost perfect, and have rivalled even Cenarth's lovely glen and sparkling cascade.

Wandering on the road for a while alongside of the badly-treated river, we came to an old mill, that once might have formed a pleasing subject for the artist's brush, but, alas! its ancient water-wheel had been removed, and an ugly turbine had taken its place. We supposed that some enterprising individual from Birmingham, or elsewhere, had been in those parts, and had persuaded the people to purchase some of his wretched productions. A gray-green, droning mill-wheel, with its usual accompanying sparkle and gleam of tumbling water, is an object to look long and lovingly at; few things make a more effective water-colour drawing. Who but an engineer could admire a turbine? We could not see so much of natural beauty spoilt without uttering a protest, but, alas! one protests in vain, for who cares about the beautiful when money is weighed in the balance? The pity of it is that money so made may go, but the beauty has gone also never to return. I would that there were a public possession of scenery as well as a private possession of property. It is a grievous fact that one man by raising an ugly eyesore of a building may spoil the loveliest landscape. Truly he may not, by lucky accident. Still that is not his fault. But an ugly building, as a rule, assertively intrudes its unwelcome presence on the vision,—once observed, the eye cannot escape wholly

from it. But, again, what is the good of moralising or protesting,—such things will be; we must try and make the best of them. "Look on the bright side," as a gentleman once remarked to me in Switzerland, when I was glancing disconsolately out of the window of my hotel, grumbling at the second day of mist, rain, and gray gloom it was my lot to endure, vowing to myself how much better off I might be if I had only remained in England. "Willingly," I replied, "only show me the bright side." That was a poser! It is very well and excellent reasoning to tell any one to look on the bright side *when there is one*; but when there is not—how then?

Returning to the town, we proceeded to its ruined castle, that stands on a high mound, or perhaps a more accurate expression would be, a small hill, and a steep one. By the way, a town in Wales seems hardly complete without its castle, which in some places, as at Haverfordwest and Carmarthen, is utilised as a modern prison,—a fitting evolution of its destiny. The situation of this shattered and battered fragment of a former stately stronghold is not only very fine but curious in one respect, for the river at the spot takes a great bend, forming more than three-quarters of a circle, so that the ruin-crowned hill is nearly surrounded by a natural moat, possessing the valuable advantage that it could not be drained by any besiegers. The narrow neck of the peninsula that constituted the only ready approach to the castle was cut across by a wide, deep dyke, strongly defended, if we

judged aright from the disposition of the grass-grown crumbling walls.

The view from this spot up the narrowing Teifi valley is very fine as you look upon the clustering hills, and sweetly pretty as you look down on the winding river and its richly-wooded banks, varied by green meadows here and there, and enlivened by clean and neat little whitewashed cottages. What a charming valley to live in retired from the world! For those who desire such retirement, surely they might have it here to perfection.

As we intended, so far as possible, to follow up the picturesque course of the river the next day, we tried to trace our road ahead, so as to get some idea of the country we should pass through. We were well satisfied with the outlook, and almost wished that it were the morrow, and daylight, so that we might at once proceed on our way that promised us so many good things.

The next morning broke showery,—very showery. There was a plentiful supply of great rounded suspicious-looking clouds about, with only a few small patches of blue between. For ten minutes or more at a time down would come the rain, pelting heavily; then it would clear up and the sun shine brightly out, causing the wet roofs of the houses and the dripping leaves of the trees fairly to glisten again. Then it would quickly darken over once more, and pour as hard as ever—if not harder. So the weather tantalisingly alternated between long sharp showers and short sunny intervals of fitful brilliancy.

We waited till twelve o'clock, on the ostler's advice, to see what the weather would do then. Ostlers have, we found, a settled conviction that if the sun shines at twelve on a showery day, and there is then as much clear blue as dull cloud overhead, it is ten to one that it will continue fine; if it rains, then the reverse. My intimacy with the weather, however, leads me to feel pretty positive that any one who betted one to ten the other way would be a heavy winner. Also we have found that ostlers (besides knowing everything about horseflesh) have unlimited faith as to the changes of the far-away moon influencing the weather, and many other people have the same unwavering faith in it; therefore I would treat this belief with the utmost respect, albeit my experience of road-work (when one takes more particular note of meteorological conditions than at other times) is that the changes of the moon affect the weather about as much as the transit of one of Jupiter's satellites,—by which I mean not at all. I know that such an opinion, so boldly uttered, is as rank heresy to many. I may be wrong, but I am content to hold my views, and they can hold theirs,—and we need not be worse friends. I see no harm in stating one's convictions, but I do see very great harm in endeavouring to force them upon other people. As to the "Weather Forecasts" in the morning papers—when we saw any, which was only during the earlier and latter part of our journey,—they were frequently so safely vague, such as "Rain in places, possibly finer later," that

they were of little use; what we wanted to know being whether it was to be fine in the part we were in. Or else they were wholly wrong. I have known a forecast to be, "Wet in the early morning, fine and hot later on"; and the actual weather to be a very fine morning, changing to wet about mid-day, and turning very cold. Sometimes, however, the forecasts were right. On the whole, we found our useful little pocket-aneroid the best guide, allowing for varying elevations. With this and a glance at the sky, and a knowledge as to the direction of the wind, we could pretty well tell what sort of weather to expect for the next few hours; and that sufficed us, for "we let the morrow take care of itself."

CHAPTER XVI

By the side of the Teifi—A gem of river scenery—Llandyssil—A primitive spot—A good catch—A lucky angler—The country around Llandyssil—A tea for nothing—Hotel bills—Over the hills—Lampeter—At the sign of the Black Lion—A foreign-looking town—A regular Welshwoman—A big hill to climb—Pumpsaint—We inspect a British gold mine—Travellers' tales.

OUR aneroid had fallen over-night ; the wind was south-westerly, blowing mild and warm ; however, at twelve o'clock, the sun shone brightly out, although there was still a fine sample of rounded clouds about. The ostler gave us his solemn word that it would not rain any more that day. We felt doubtful on the point, but he said that he knew the weather in those parts, and we did not. That statement it was impossible to impugn ; so at twelve we ordered the horses to, and once more proceeded on our pilgrimage.

As we drove out of Newcastle-Emlyn we had a fine view of its castle-crowned hill, with the river sweeping round its base,—an excellent subject for a picture. Then our road led us by the wooded side of the winding Teifi, which kept us welcome company all the way to Llandyssil. The drive was one of great beauty ; the greater portion of our stage being under leafy branching trees, through

which the softened sunshine shone, forming changeful patterns of green and gold about us. Through the trees we had a succession of delightful peeps of the river, in its quiet stretches gleaming and glancing along, and, by way of change, tumbling and swirling over huge gray boulders where they impeded its course. The river reminded us of some men who are mild and smooth of temper when unopposed, but when opposed their natures change.

Some of the cottages we passed we noticed were thatched, the thatch extending to the very tops of their rounded chimneys, and being bound round with bands to keep it in place. We could not help wondering how it was that the chimneys did not get on fire. Thatched cottages are very unusual in Wales,—a land of slate and stone. Here again this valley, with its rich woods, luxuriant meadows, and especially its homely thatched cottages, irresistibly recalled Devonshire to us. The air, now and again, was fragrant with wood fires, sweet-scented with wild flowers, and warm with the resinous odours of spruce and pine. Not only country scenes but country perfumes also delight the senses.

About half-way to Llandyssil we came upon a little gem of river scenery, at a spot where the Teifi narrows and rushes down in a foaming cascade over some large boulders that obstruct its path. On either side the rocky banks are overhung with trees, and are joined together by a gray, old, single-arched, ivy-grown bridge. Such a delicious, restful spot: a dream of lonely loveliness! It was as though

Nature had determined to focus the beauties of the valley there. The musical rustling of the multitudinous leaves above, the gurgling and splashing of the rushing waters below, the soft green gloom of the foliage, with the bright patches of sunlight resting on rock, wood, and running water: how are all these to be put into words? They are to be felt, rather than described, so I will not attempt it.

Then on we drove past thick shady woods again—and through a clearing: what did we see? Surely our eyes deceived us! Alas no, there was no mistake: that long, hideous embankment of earth and stones was nothing less than a railway being built along this delightful valley. Soon now will its sweet seclusion be gone for ever, and the shrill-tongued locomotive whistle will mingle with the peace-bestowing sounds of falling and rippling water, the songs of birds, and the melody of wind-stirred trees.

Now the valley for a space opened out, and at one point on the opposite hillside we noticed a deep, dark glen that appeared as though it would amply repay exploring; but there was no bridge across the river, though there was a fine one all aslant that spanned the narrow ravine, with a tremendously steep track leading from it up the mountain-side. We were thankful that it was not our road.

Soon after this we reached Llandyssil, a primitive village, romantically situated by the side of the Teifi,—here the very beau-ideal of a rocky mountain river. Just as we were entering the place we saw

an angler standing by the river-side, rod in hand, and on the low wall close beside him was a large silvery salmon, which he had caught only a few moments before we came on the scene. Had we only been a little earlier we should have seen the capture; and it is a pretty sight to see a clever fisherman play and land a large salmon. "You've had some sport to-day," we shouted. "Rather," came the reply above the gurgling of the river. "It's a twenty-pounder." Now we all know what "fisherman's weight" is,—an article from which a considerable allowance must always be made; but we heard afterwards from the landlord of our hotel that that special fish did actually turn the scale at fifteen pounds.

At Llandyssil we patronised the Porth Arms, and found comfortable quarters there, with a great airy bedroom, having a charming view up and down the river. It was manifestly a day on which the fish were rising, for looking out of our window we saw a man catch two small trout. I cannot now say that I have never seen an angler catch a fish. Another sight vastly amused me here, and showed the pleasant primitiveness of the place. Glancing down, I noticed the dog-cart being wheeled into the shallow bed of the river to be washed; and a very good way of washing it too. The water supply was plentiful, only it was rather hard work getting the carriage down the steep bank to the stream, and harder still getting it up again; but as some one else did that, it did not concern me. How out of the world picturesque Llandyssil is may be judged from

the fact that going to the post-office to send off a telegram to Eastbourne, the postmaster seriously asked me if I were quite sure that there was such a place in England, nor would he be convinced till he had referred to his book and found it mentioned there. "Well, to be sure," he remarked, "I never heard of Eastbourne before." This was simply delightful.

The country around Llandyssil is very beautiful and varied. In the afternoon we set out to see something of it, and possibly to get a sketch or two, having determined, as we were so comfortably quartered in the midst of such fine scenery, that we would not proceed farther that day. We took a glance at the interior of the church as we passed by. This interested us because of its uncompromising simplicity and rugged honesty of building. Better far thus plain than with cheap decoration unintelligently applied that does not decorate. The arches between the nave and the aisles are shaped out of the rude wall of rough stones, without any capitals, just as though the wall had been built and the arches cut out of it. The unadorned interior was in truth exceedingly impressive because of its frankness of purpose. It is not of the highest form of architectural art truly, but in these days of showy shams, ornamental veneer, and straining after ready effect, it was refreshing to find a bit of straightforward, undecorated, honest building, content to rely upon bold outline and good proportions for its beauty. Downright honesty is always pleasing.

Strolling along a lonely wooded glen, which we

reached by following up a stream from near our hotel, we came to a primitive but very useful wire suspension bridge. From this point the view looking both up and down the lovely glen, with its brawling mountain river splashing from rock to rock, its leafy solitudes, and darksome recesses of pillared pines, was most charming. But all around Llandyssil the scenery is most picturesque, not to say romantic ; wander in what direction you will, you cannot go wrong,—it is a perfect paradise for artists and anglers. The still beauty of the golden evening, with its low warm lights, the clearness and freshness of all things after rain, the softness of the distance, may have had a good deal to do with the favourable impression that the scene made upon us, but not all ; they doubtless enhanced the beauty of the prospect, but they did not give to the hills their outline, nor to the woods their grace of form, nor to the rocks their boldness, nor to the river its voiceful melody. Had David Cox only painted his pictures about here instead of at Bettws-y-Coed (then unknown to fame), Llandyssil perchance would have become as renowned, as artist-haunted, and as tourist-beset, as that much-visited North Welsh village.

On our paying our very reasonable bill the next morning, we noticed that our afternoon tea, supplied to us with delicious cream, excellent home-made cakes, bread and butter, and marmalade, was not mentioned, and when we called attention to the omission the landlady simply said that she "could not think of charging for such a trifle." Truly,

travellers by road, out of the beaten track of tourists, have much to be grateful for. They may enjoy a holiday at a minimum of expense, with a maximum of kindness and attention that makes the payment of the moderate reckoning of the country inn an actual pleasure. By the way, I have never felt this particular pleasure when paying my bill at a company-owned hotel.

From Llandyssil we struck across country to Lampeter; and a very hilly drive we had the first portion of our journey. At the very start the climbing began. It was all uphill and good honest collar-work for three miles or more; but we had to get over the hills somehow, and were by no means sorry when we got well on the top of them, for then the road became fairly level, albeit rather rough and stony. The "fairly" level was, however, varied by one or two sharp pitches. These, though severe, had the merit (which sermons rarely have) of being short. We were, however, amply rewarded for our climbing by the glorious views all around that our elevated position afforded. The climate, too, as well as the scenery, was considerably changed by our ascent. Though it had been quite warm on leaving Llandyssil, up on those wind-swept heights it was quite cool—so much so that a light overcoat was very acceptable. Overcoats and rugs are necessary luxuries on a prolonged driving tour. The transition from a sheltered lowland valley to a bleak upland in the one day means oftentimes a great variation of temperature; and

for a lady a warm shawl or cloak, besides a water-proof, is absolutely needful.

Around us was an ocean of moorland, stretching away and away, with endless rises and falls, till lost in the pale blue of the dim, dreamy distance. A vast expanse of spreading moors, broken by ridges and rocky ravines, and enlivened by the occasional sparkle of running water, or the gleam of stilly pool. A region in which the solitude was supreme, the silence impressive; the only sounds we heard were the crunching of our carriage wheels on the rough and stony road, and the half-mournful murmuring of the wandering wind as it passed us by. Over all this breadth of wilderness, charming in its dreary desolation, mighty masses of sunshine and shadow followed one another in endless succession, sweeping across the shoulders of the swelling moors, and raking up and down their rounded hollows. Somehow that morning we felt very far away from the everyday world, lifted right above it, out of all its trivial worries, unsatisfied longings, and restless ambitions. What, just then, was it to us? We were too full of our own happiness to trouble our heads about it. For a time we had forgotten the world, and possibly it had forgotten us.

Our eyes delighted to range unrestrained over the extended prospect of undulating landscape. From the grassy wastes close around us our visions roved over gray crag, scarred cliff, and heathery hill, to the misty mountains that encircled the hazy horizon. I love these spacious solitudes with the

wide dome of the sky above,—true solitudes, where one may enjoy undisturbed the sweet companionship of Nature. The lonely moors and downs and fells are not lonely to me; I love them, whether under the gray gloom of a winter's day or rejoicing in the sunny glory of the summertime. Their stillness, loneliness, bracing airs, and space-expressing distances have a charm not to be defined in words.

For those weary of the dust and din and ceaseless bustle of towns, a day on the open moors comes as a blessed relief from the monotony of multitudes, the crowded confusions of streets, the crush and general unrest of many-peopled cities. Strangely enough, as coming from a land of grand scenery and magnificent distances, an American once told me that nothing in Britain so pleased or impressed him as did the moors. It was the rare blending of wild wilderness with tender beauty that so attracted him,—a grandeur that was solemn, yet not forbidding; a sternness that was not harsh; a desolation that was not dispiriting. The moors are rugged enough, and wild enough, yet there is a sort of friendly feeling about their very ruggedness that is most alluring. Save for the few roads that wind over them, they are much the same as they were long centuries ago. Man has failed to tame them as he has done the rest of the land. In the heart of thickly-peopled, mellowed England they still remain as relics of a primeval world. As the ancient aborigines saw them, so do we,—unchanged in an age that abounds in constant

change. Long may these heather-grown and gorse-clad wildernesses be preserved to us!

There is nothing depressing about the wildness of the moors; their colouring is cheerful rather than gloomy. The purple of heather and the gold of gorse are not melancholy tints, rather are they regal ones; and the great open skies above them are full of light. But the beauty of their colouring in no way detracts from the effectiveness of their solemn grandeur. To me, the prospect over a mighty far-reaching stretch of moorlands is more impressive than the sight of a snow-clad alp; the long vanishing lines of the moors, fading away with many a mighty curve into a mystery of distant blue, are peculiarly suggestive of infinity,—the highest mountain is finite.

Then a long and gradual descent took us down from the broad uplands to a soft and treeful lowland country. Green meadows and waving woods took the place of heather-clad slopes and barren hill. Soon after getting into the valley we reached a scattered stony village, where in one of the cottages we caught a glimpse in passing of a hand-loom, and a man engaged in weaving. This, in an age of steam, is almost as rare a sight as a spinning-wheel in use. But we saw both hand-looms and spinning-wheels employed during the Welsh portion of our tour; and it was quite a common thing to see the industrious Welshwomen busily knitting, even whilst they walked and talked. We saw far more lazy men in Wales than women. At this village we crossed a bridge which spanned another gladsome

mountain stream that laughed and leaped over its pebbly bed, and then suddenly became sedate as it flowed through the more level meadows beyond. In a recess on the bridge was a stone cross, by rough guesswork about fifteen feet in height. What was the purpose of this we could not make out, for it was literally plastered all over with bills and notices. We ventured to tear off some of these, in order to discover if there were any hidden inscription beneath, but found none. It was by no means pleasing, after our long and lonely wanderings over mountains and moorlands, to be thus reminded of civilisation.

Now we had an excellent, winding, and fairly level road all the way on to Lampeter. It was delightful to be able once more to proceed at full trot; and the easy swing of the carriage on the smooth highway was an agreeable change from the jolting over the rough, rutty, and stony roads we had experienced of late. Farther on, we passed a large tree-surrounded sheet of water, dignified on our map with the name of Lyn Pencarreg, but it was without any special feature. Possibly it is more fishful than picturesque, for afterwards we heard an angler call it beautiful.

We were very pleased with Lampeter. It struck us as being a very clean, neat little town, charmingly situated in a fertile valley with bold mountains all around, though a guide-book we afterwards glanced at called it "an ill-built straggling place." But then, perhaps, the writer of the work had not seen it!

Not only did Lampeter itself please us, but our inn there, the Black Lion to wit, was a success ; —an ancient hostelry, which we entered by a low archway in the centre, just as the travellers in the past coaching times must have entered it ; and, as though still more to bring back the olden days, we found, standing in its ample courtyard, a very red mail-cart in all the glory of a new coat of vermillion, waiting to convey the mails to rail-less Aberayron and elsewhere.

In the centre of this remote little town is a picturesque stone fountain, having an abundant supply of water. This gave the place quite a foreign look. In the main street we noticed a Welsh-woman walking along wearing one of those quaint pyramidal hats that one sees often in pictures but very seldom in reality. It is greatly to be regretted that this distinctive headgear is now so little worn, it is so fresh and unconventional. The monotony of dress is becoming wearisome ; a slavish uniformity is gradually taking the place of the picturesque provincial "get-up." Even the red cloak and shawl are not so common in Wales as they used to be ; and in England the country gentleman and his gamekeeper are clothed so much alike it is difficult to tell one from the other by sight ; and the tourist with his tweed suit and knickerbockers is the same all Britain over, unless in Scotland, where sometimes he dresses more like a Highlander than the Highlander himself.

We soon saw all that the town had to show us, after which we set off for a ramble round

about. We found some pleasant footpaths that led us across green fields, through shady woods, and along watered glens, and these made our wanderings very delightful. During our ramble we discovered an old water-mill, which tempted us into making a sketch; then, on returning to our inn and late dinner, we lost our way, and had to do some cross-country scrambling, and negotiate some serious fences. However, "all's well that ends well," and we eventually reached our comfortable quarters just sufficiently tired to thoroughly enjoy a lazy evening.

The next morning opened gloomily; the sky was overcast, and on looking out of our window we noticed that the roofs of the houses above and the pavement of the streets below were wet. This was provoking, for we had a long and hilly stage before us. We were right in the heart of the mountains, in a sort of *cul de sac*. The roads out of Lampeter were few and rough. Besides the one that we had entered it by, there was another to Aberayron, on the coast (where we did not want to go); then there was another northward to Tregaron that, judging from our map, practically went no farther, or at any rate became lost amongst a series of tracks amongst the mountains. The other road led westward in the direction we wished, but this would take us back again to Llandovery. However, there we were—we could not make fresh roads; and, after due consideration, we decided to drive across the hills to Llandovery,—and a glorious drive, though a rather wet one, we had. According

to the ostler, the distance was twenty miles driving ourselves, but posting it was over twenty. The point was not lost upon us.

The weather was still threatening when we started, and glancing up to a vane to see the direction of the wind, we found in place of the familiar letters "N. W. S. E." their Welsh equivalents of "G. Gu. D. Du." so that the vane did not help us much. However, the ostler smilingly assured us that we should have plenty of rain, so before we set out we prepared for storms, the more especially as we learned that the country we were about to traverse was barren and shelterless; and we knew pretty well by long experience what that meant.

Out of Lampeter we had a good three and a half miles of constant collar-work; but we were getting used to this sort of thing, and it in no way surprised us. We, however, let our horses take it easily, for it is the pace rather than the hilliness or the badness of the way that takes it out of cattle. Looking back from time to time as we rose, we had simply a magnificent mountain panorama. Beyond the great green slopes around and below us there rose up grandly a confusion of crested hills, "telling" (as an artist would remark) a deep purple under the looming sky.

As we climbed we got into a misty rain, then a long, winding descent through pine woods leading past many a pretty little glen brought us down out of the damp mists and into the romantically situated and very much out-of-the-world village

of Pumpsaint. At the primitive inn there we obtained a frugal meal of bread and cheese and ale, which, after our long drive in the keen mountain air, we thoroughly enjoyed. Better such simple fare, with good appetite, than a *recherché* luncheon in a London club, without. On the road ale tastes better far than the finest brand of champagne, and a homely repast is more relished than the most sumptuous banquet.

Chatting with our landlady, we learnt that about half a mile from the village was a veritable British gold mine ; and, moreover, rumour had it that the precious metal was found there in considerable quantities. But we all know what rumour is,—almost as reliable as the “fisherman’s weight” aforesaid. This information inspired us with a desire to see the mine, but our landlady said that it was never shown to strangers, and was kept strictly closed to every one except those who had an order to view from the owners in London. This was not encouraging, but nevertheless we determined, if it were in any way possible, to see it ; at any rate there was no harm in making the attempt. How to set to work was the question, so we made inquiries as to who was the person in authority, and were told that the “Captain” of the mine was the proper party to approach. Then we set out in search of that important individual, and luckily ran him to earth at the post-office, where he was calling for letters. We lost no time in introducing ourselves as travellers by road, and expressed our curiosity to obtain a glance at the mine. “But

it's not shown to strangers," he civilly replied. "We don't know who people are that come here, and some of them might make a wrong use of any information they obtained." We thought it wise not to repeat our request at the moment, but as he was returning to the mine, begged permission to accompany him so far, that we might just see where it was situated. This he could not well refuse, as there is a public footpath close to the site of the venture (as he termed it). On the way there we chatted about all sorts of things, and so managed to ingratiate ourselves in his good opinion, and so impressed him with our little knowledge of mining, and of gold mining in particular, that eventually his good nature got the better of his scruples, and he remarked, "Well, I'm just going in the mine, and you can come along with me if you like." We did like. He was quite safe in taking us over, for on our return from the underground gloom to the bright daylight we had not even the remotest idea as to whether the mine abounded in gold, or whether there was but little in it. Nor did we ask; all we wanted was to see what a British gold mine was like,—and it seemed to us very similar to a Derbyshire lead-working. We wished the obliging Captain and the undertaking every prosperity,—there was no harm in that.

The mine is situated in a charmingly wooded glen; but, remote as the glen is, right in the heart of untravelled Wales, the Romans had been there ages before, mining also, and that on no insignificant scale. The Captain pointed out to us

several old Roman workings, some of which extended underground for long distances. Their construction excited his admiration. These are square at the top, not rounded as in the present day, and the chisel-marks of the ancient workmen are still plainly visible, as sharp now as they were centuries ago.

Climbing up the rocky slope of the glen, we reached a rude wooden door, placed right on the face of the steep cliff. Above was a small flag flying, and around was the débris of the workings, amongst which was a quantity of quartz waiting to be crushed to yield the metal it held. This was the mine,—not much to look at externally. Having provided ourselves with lights, our guide unlocked the door, and passing by a store of dynamite, we entered a long, damp—very damp—tunnel, with a stream of water and a tramway-line running along the bottom. The darkness, damp, and sulphurous odours were very disagreeable, for just before our arrival some blasting with dynamite had taken place, and the fumes of that explosive hung heavily about the enclosed space. As we proceeded, getting thoroughly wet underfoot, and half-suffocated with the close smoke-charged atmosphere, we almost wished that we had not been so curious. After all, there was not much to see. At the end of the narrow, long, winding tunnel we came to the main working. Here a large space was hollowed out, and a windlass was erected over a deep shaft. At the bottom of the shaft men were busy working, clearing the débris away after the blasting,

and sending up small quantities of gold-bearing quartz,—and that is all there was to see. When sufficient promising-looking quartz is collected, it is conveyed along the tramway to the head of the mine to be crushed, and have whatever gold it may possess extracted from it. Groping our way back, how bright the daylight seemed, how pure and sweet the country air! It was like going out of Hades into Paradise.

Our guide then took us into a little wooden shed situated at the foot of the glen, where the business of the mine was conducted. Here he showed us some quartz, which he said was rich in gold; and moreover presented us with a small portion of the quartz, having a narrow vein of the precious metal running through it. This we took away with us as a memento of our visit. Then getting into a long chat with the Captain, it appeared that he had led a life of adventure, having been out on the West Coast of Africa managing gold-mining enterprises. But the climate there was too bad for him, and so he returned home fortuneless, but experienced, for, said he, "What's the good of a fortune to a man when his wife's a widow?" He told us that upon one occasion, when prospecting in Africa, he picked up out of the sand of an old river-bed, all in one morning, as much as forty-three ounces of gold in small bits, which he put into a gin-bottle—the only receptacle at hand. Afterwards the mine that was established on the ground was called the Gin-Bottle mine. At one spot in the Soudan, where he was exploring, he told us that he came upon a huge

quarried stone half-buried in the sands. This he found, on stepping it, to be about sixty feet long and twenty feet wide. The discovery set him thinking that, after all, the ancients knew a good deal more about engineering than we give them credit for, or how otherwise could they have hewed, removed, and employed such enormous monoliths? He also saw an ancient copper chisel, hardened by some means like steel, that would cut stone, or even iron. We came to the conclusion that the Captain was far more interesting than the mine. We could have spent another hour or two very enjoyably and profitably chatting with him, but the day was growing old, and we had still ten good miles before us over an unknown road, with the only certainty that it would be a hilly one. So, after expressing our thanks for the kindness and unexpected courtesy shown to us in being permitted to inspect a real British gold mine, we retraced our steps to the inn, and soon got "under way" once more.

CHAPTER XVII

Amongst the hills—In the clouds—A lovely glen—Mountain gloom and mountain glory—Llangorse Lake—A slight mishap—Crickhowell—A cottage weaver—Primitive trading—A little place with a long name—Abergavenny—In the heart of the Black Mountains—Gloomy scenery—A secluded dale—Llanthony Abbey—The poetry of painting—Romance *versus* fact.

LEAVING Pumpsaint, the road soon gave us a taste of its quality. It was hard climbing again. Up and up we slowly went, exchanging the wooded valley for the desolation of the hills, and the dull cloudy weather for driving mists and drizzling rain. Up and up we went right amongst the barren mountains, the mists sweeping down from their riven summits as though they would descend and smother us. Above the sound of the southing wind, and above the rumbling of the dog-cart on the rough road, we could hear the rush and roar of distant torrents and the melancholy bleating of the scattered mountain sheep; but on account of the mists that blotted out all around us we could see little definitely of anything. Enough, however, was suggested to make us feel what a grandly wild tract of country we were passing through, for now and then as the weather momentarily cleared we could just discern, dimly looming up through the lightening mists, precipitous

peaks and savage crags, and down the slopes and mighty gullies of the mountains were narrow streaks of white just visible, where countless streams were foaming downwards from the louring clouds.

When nearly at the top of the pass, a big, black bird came sailing along before the wind right over our heads. Had not eagles long ago taken their departure from wild Wales, we should have imagined that the strange bird was one,—as it was we were puzzled to identify it. How is it that Englishmen, whenever they may chance to see a strange or rare bird, are never content till they shoot it?

After a time our sky-soaring road ceased to rise any more, and we were thankful for the fact. Then we commenced to descend, and soon left behind us the treeless mountain tract. A glorious, long, downhill drive we had for three miles or more, with the brake hard on all the while, and the horses going easy. Down we went at a merry pace right through the heart of a forest of pointed pines, with a brawling torrent for company, foaming and splashing and dashing over the boulders that bestrewed its bed, overleaping many a one in its haste to reach the valley below. How often we crossed that noisy stream, and how many bridges we passed over during our descent I cannot say, but the old road-builders must have had a lot of work to engineer that track up that glen and over those rugged mountains.

As we descended, the weather grew markedly warmer, the air became quite balmy and fragrant besides with the resinous odours of the pines, and

though the rain fell, the uncomfortable drizzle grew gradually less and less thick, and then a suspicion of yellow showed itself in front of us, and suddenly, lo! we found ourselves in a world of glowing sunshine. What a transition from the barren gloom of the mountains to the gladness of the fertile valley! and looking upward we saw the gray clouds still hanging upon the grayer mountains. And so driving on we found ourselves once more back again at pleasant Llandovery.

In the evening we consulted our faithful road-book and maps, and found that, as at Lampeter so here, we were bound in by the mountains. In fact, there were only two practicable roads for us out of Llandovery,—one leading northward to Builth through a wild mountain district, the other westward to Brecon. We were for a long while undecided whether to go on to Builth, and from that place strike across England for home, or whether to retrace our outward route just as far as Brecon (a distance of twenty-one miles), and from there make our way back to London again by a more southerly course than the one we took coming. By returning to Brecon, it was true that we should have to repeat our former stage between that town and Llandovery. This was a slight drawback; but, on the other hand, a glance at our maps showed us that by so doing we could pass through Abergavenny, and from there we could penetrate into the heart of the little-visited Black Mountains, and thus be enabled to pay a long-premeditated pilgrimage to lonely Llanthony Abbey. Now, though we had seen nearly

all the other ruined abbeys of Britain, we had never been to Llanthony, perhaps the loveliest of them all, and certainly the most secluded. This fact decided our course. It was well worth while repeating a day's stage for the sake of including that famous old monastic ruin on our return journey. Besides, though we elected to pass once again over the same ground, should we not see the country from a different point of view? therefore to a certain extent it would be fresh to us. So the next day we arranged that we would return to Brecon, and we were very glad of the opportunity of getting another glimpse of the charming Gwdderig valley.

It was curious, considering how comparatively recently we had traversed it, what an unfamiliar aspect the stretch of country on to Brecon appeared to have, simply owing of course to our seeing it in reverse; and what a number of points of interest we noted that had escaped our observation on the outward journey. At one spot we stopped to sketch a picturesque ford and some stepping-stones, at another to photograph an old deserted and ruined mill close by the river-side, both perfect pictures, yet somehow we had missed these before.

On the same principle, when driving across country it often repays you to give an occasional glance backwards,—many a charming peep may thus be obtained which otherwise would have been missed. By so doing, without travelling farther, you may add materially to the scenic “bag” of a day's wanderings.

We noticed on the way that stones were being

freely removed from the bed of the river,—large boulders for building, and small pebbles for road-mending. As this goes on, in time the character of the stream will be altered. Its rocky bed will know it no more ; it will become smooth of surface like the Thames,—a lowland river in a mountain land.

Approaching Brecon we had a grand view before us of our old friends the Beacons. Their rugged sides and mighty shoulders were lighted up by the sun ; their great hollows and ravines were a pearly-gray in shadow ; and on their highest peak rested a roseate cloud. We had seen a good deal of mountain gloom of late, now, by way of change, we had a glimpse of mountain glory.

At Brecon we received a hearty welcome from the landlady of the Castle Inn. After all, there is more or less pleasure in returning to quarters where you have already experienced good treatment : in such a mood you feel that inn-loving Dr. Johnson was not far wrong in his often-quoted remark to Boswell when they too were driving together across country. "No, sir," remarked the famous doctor, "there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn." Manifestly that old English worthy, in spite of his pronounced city proclivities, was enjoying his holiday on the road. Peace be to his ashes!

We left Brecon on a morning of sunshine and clouds—just enough sunshine to brighten up the landscape without glare, and sufficient cloud to afford frequent and agreeable shade. It was one

IN THE GWDDERIG VALLEY



of those perfect days that make life worth living, and a driving tour a thing above all others to be desired.

Once clear of the town, we found ourselves following the downward course of the Usk, passing through a green and pleasant pastoral land, rich in woods, and dotted with cosy cottage homes. The road was excellent, being smooth as to surface, and for the first few miles, wonderful to relate, mostly in our favour. So for the nonce we gave the horses their heads, and indulged in a long and rapid spin. It was a treat to get on "pushing ground," as such favourable stretches of the road were termed in the good old coaching days. But all too soon our level way came to an end,—good things always do seem to come to an end quickly,—for just as we were congratulating ourselves on having escaped any serious climbing, suddenly our road began to rise, gently at first, then stiffly, and soon we found ourselves mounting up the side of a big hill,—a regular mountain pass. From the highest point of this we had a far-reaching panorama all around. To our left a vast stretch of lowland country lay spread out map-like beneath us, enlivened by the gleam of the still water of Llangorse Lake, the largest llyn in South Wales, and well known to fishermen. Looking backward, we had a fine prospect of the winding Usk, the Brecon Beacons forming a noble background to the view. Ahead of us we gazed down on a narrow green and tree-ful vale, which we could trace almost as far as Abergavenny; the quaintly-shaped Sugarloaf

was a pleasing novelty to us, and a fact that would surely have delighted the heart of Ruskin, to find that the productions of a cottage hand-loom were sought after, and that this home industry was a profitable one. Before we left, I ordered a dress-length of material for my wife as a memento of our visit. We selected a design from his pattern book, and he promised to put our little order in hand at once, and send it on as soon as finished by Parcel Post. I paid him the money he asked. No receipt was offered me at the time, and I did not ask for any. I would not do anything to spoil the rare charm of such primitive trading. Shortly after our return home, the material, beautifully woven, arrived, with a receipt and thanks—*in pencil*—enclosed.

From Crickhowell to Abergavenny was a delightful drive through a lonely, lovely, wooded country. A few rabbits came out of the woods on to the road to have a look at us, and did not seem a bit afraid, otherwise we had the way all to ourselves. A short distance from Crickhowell we passed a curious stone by the roadside at the boundary of the two counties of Brecon and Monmouth, with two faces carved on it, one looking into England, the other into Wales. Though Monmouth is nominally an English county, it has a very Welsh look, and in the less-frequented parts, especially amongst the Black Mountains, the Celtic language is still mostly spoken. The names too of the villages are as Welsh as ever, and as perplexing to the Saxon tongue to pronounce aright :

and as for length, they will hold their own with those in any part of the Principality. The more unimportant the place, the more letters it seems to possess. As an example, I take one at random from my map. It is that of a tiny hamlet about half-way, in a direct line, between Abergavenny and Monmouth. This, then, is it—Llanfihangelsternllewern; and I could match it with one or two others equally long, but I forbear. Fancy having to address a letter there, or, worse still, to have to ask your way of a native to the spot!

At Abergavenny we found most comfortable quarters at the Angel, an old coaching house mentioned in our road-book,—one of those pastime hostgeries that has retained its old-fashioned ways and look, and where post horses may be had to this day, also good wine for payment, and in the cosy bar gossip free of charge. There is of course a railway at Abergavenny, but the Railway Hotel, essentially modern, all plate glass, glare, and bustle, has not there, as in many towns, usurped the place of the less pretentious, but infinitely more comfortable, old English inn.

After our long country wanderings, and the sleepy little Welsh towns, so delightfully uncommercial, we had come across on our way, Abergavenny appeared to us quite a large and busy place. No longer did we have the roadway all to ourselves; there was actually traffic in the streets, and we had to keep to our right side, which was our left, according to the old joke about the rule of the road. The shops looked also quite attractive

after our absence from such allurements, and I am afraid that we spent more money upon useless trifles than we ought to have done. Possibly coming by rail direct from London, Abergavenny might seem a very dull and a slow sort of a place ; things so depend upon contrasts.

Hunting up the ostler, we inquired of him as to the road to Llanthony, and found that it was a rough one, narrow for the greater portion of the way, but quite feasible for carriages. The distance was about eleven miles. This was so far satisfactory. Therefore the next day, the weather being propitious, we determined to make an early start for the abbey. We awoke betimes next morning, but found that the sun was up first ; he generally somehow manages to get the advantage of us in this respect, but we can give him long odds and a beating any night, which is some satisfaction. The day was all that we could desire, not to be improved upon even had we specially ordered it ; and so, after a hearty breakfast, we set out in the best of spirits on our comfortable pilgrimage on wheels to remote Llanthony, armed with sketch-books and photographic apparatus. For though we found we could purchase in the town any number of photographs of the abbey, we wished to take it from our own point of view. The professional photographer's idea of the picturesque does not always agree with our own : not that I wholly blame him,—he takes pictures for sale, we for pleasure ; his business is to include as much as possible of any place he takes ; ours to obtain the most poetic aspect of it, even though, by so doing,

we may miss a prominent gable, or an arch, or some other noticeable feature that the ordinary tourist, who is the chief purchaser of such productions, insists upon having.

Leaving Abergavenny, we wound round the base of the Sugarloaf, which has a companion peak on the opposite side of the valley in the shape of the Holy Mountain. The two titles struck us as rather curious. Then at a pretty little hamlet we struck on a rough country road leading along the narrow hill-girt valley that penetrates the deserted recesses of the Black Mountains. From this hamlet we followed up the little river Honddu, which rises in the bleak moorlands at the head of the valley, and flows near by the foot of the old monastic fane.

It was a glorious drive up that grand, wild glen. On either side of us were weather-scarred cliffs and frowning crags. It was a solemn scene ; the only bright thing about it being the tiny river, gambolling and splashing along its stony bed. At one spot on the way we noticed carved on a slab let into a rough wall the representation of a large fish. This looked something like a salmon. Just then a native chanced to be passing. Of him we made inquiries as to the rude bit of sculpture. But he knew nothing about it ; had never even noticed it before, he said, till we pointed it out to him. Strange, how little country folk appear to be acquainted with their own immediate surroundings ; but then, again, an American who once paid me a visit in London expressed his astonishment of how little I knew about the city in which I live. He would

hardly credit the astonishing fact that I had never been up the Monument, nor had I even been over the Mint, nor the Bank of England, and sundry other places besides ; yet, curiously enough, I found that he had not been to Niagara, and I had been there twice.

At one portion of our way we passed through a forest of fir trees ; otherwise the journey was a bleak and dreary one. Altogether, the Black Mountains seem well to deserve their title, for even on that bright, sunny day they had a decidedly gloomy look. Possibly this may be due to the dark colouring of their rocks ; and the narrowness of the valley, with the height of the hills and cliffs around, certainly adds to the melancholy impression of the scenery, by causing it to be so much in shade. In threatening weather, with great gray rain-clouds hovering about and joining peak to peak, the dreary desolation of the valley must be complete. If the supreme desire of the first builders of the abbey was to get to some remote solitude right away from the world, they certainly obtained their wish.

So driving up that grand and lonesome valley, at last we caught sight of the gray old ruins of Llanthony, nestling at the foot of the mountains, and just peeping out of the woods around : for the ancient monks had chosen for their abode the most fertile part of the valley, as well as the most secluded. Part of the ruins had, we found, been converted into a farmhouse (a pleasanter one I do not know).

That court contains my cattle ; swine are there ;
Here fowls and fuel ; underneath is beer.
Snug in that chamber, sir, my corn is kept ;
My clover yonder, where a king has slept.
My dame her curds does in the chapel squeeze—
In chancel salts her chines ; the font holds cheese.

There is one thing about Llanthony that charmed us—it is not turned into a peep-show at so much a head ; it has been spared this last indignity. We had to pay nothing at a wicket-gate for admission, no guide troubled us, no tourists were there, no notice-boards were about. The people of the farm came and went about their work, but, beyond bidding us a cheery good-day as they passed, they took no heed of us. We had the ruins all to ourselves, or nearly so, for some rooks when we arrived were holding a profane and noisy discussion upon the site of the very high altar. We even managed to sketch in peace, and photographed where we would without a soul taking the least notice,—a rare treat. This was the only occasion, I believe, during the whole of our journey that we were able to take a photograph without having a self-posed figure in it.

The architecture of Llanthony is of a simple kind, effective for its gracefulness of form, but not highly decorated. The weather-worn walls, broken arches, and crumbling tower are left to the care of Time, and no other. Amongst the ruins we observed an old tombstone with a cross on the top doing duty as a seat ; also built into a wall a fragment of another tombstone with portion

of an ornamental cross, a chalice, and a clasped Bible thereon ; and a still smaller fragment of what was once possibly an altar-slab to a knight. This had on it merely an armed shoe with spurs, and a portion of scroll-work. Besides the ancient walls, these were the only things of interest that we discovered. The architecture of Llanthony, as I have said, is simple ; it seems to me to belong to an early form of Early English before it had quite freed itself from Norman influence. Perhaps Early English with a Norman feeling would best describe it. What authorities on the matter say, I do not know, not having looked any up.

After a while we ventured to knock at the farmhouse door to beg a glass of milk, for the day was warm, and loitering about doing nothing in particular is thirsty work,—at any rate a good many people find it so. We asked for a glass of milk, and obtained a simple lunch, for the landlord of the farm, we found, laid himself out to entertain the few visitors who find their way to this mountain solitude ; and we even discovered that a bedroom for the night might be had in one of the ancient towers of the abbey. We went so far as to inspect the chamber, which had an arched ceiling and a stone floor. It was cool, clean, and fairly comfortable ; the very room to dream of ghosts in—after a good dinner, for one can stand that sort of thing better then. We even found an ancient visitors' book here, but little of real interest therein. The first entry was as follows : " March 23, 1881. Ignatius O. S. B., monk of Llanthony Abbey, stayed here

to-night in the sacred old priory ; he could get no farther, so bad is the road to our monastery." The *new* Llanthony Abbey (for every one will call the ruined priory *the abbey*) is situated about another four miles higher up the valley, close to Capel-y-Ffyn. Here a party of modern monks are doing their best to imitate their medieval brethren's mode of life. In the visitors' book a few, as might be expected, have tried their hand (more or less unsuccessfully) at poetry. Their great trouble seems to have been to find a word to rhyme with Llanthony. Here is a specimen of a wandering poet's production,—modesty has prevented the composer giving his name.

We came to the vale of Llanthony
Over mountains all rocky and stony,
 We were tired and faint
 As any old saint,
Or prior, or monk of Llanthony,

But the supper they spread out before us,
Did quickly regale and restore us,
 And we slept in the tower
 Like a Paradise bower,
After singing a merry old chorus.

The history of Llanthony, if long, is simple. A priory (not an abbey) for Austin Canons was founded there in 1107. The priory in time grew exceedingly wealthy by the numerous gifts that were showered upon it; but when the monks had accumulated much riches, they deserted their mother monastery. According to the friends of the monks, they were so harried by the wild Welshmen around,

their crops were so frequently destroyed, and their peace disturbed, that the majority of the fraternity looked out for another site on which to build a fresh monastery. Eventually they secured some "fat" lands near Gloucester, and thereto they removed and commenced raising a new religious house. Some of the more faithful monks, however, declined to desert the ancient establishment in the wilderness.

On the other hand, according to their enemies, the real cause of the monks moving their quarters was that they became tired of the barren mountains, of cultivating rocky slopes, of the severe seclusion of the place, and generally grew impatient of their condition at lonely Llanthony, comparing their hard lot with the luxury and ease of other religious establishments situated in more fertile localities. Possibly the exact truth as to the sudden desertion of Llanthony will never be known. If the original monks sought above all other things for solitude, their followers seem to have quickly determined to exchange it for the tumult of the world and the society of Gloucester.

In time the new abbey became even richer than the mother one, and the monks appear to have grown fat and lazy, for we find that they actually begrudged providing anything for the maintenance of the old edifice, or for the performance of service there. For one of the few faithful monks of the time, writing from Llanthony, according to Dugdale, thus expressed himself: "To avoid the scandal of deserting an ancient monastery, long accustomed

to religious worship, and endowed with large possessions, they send hither their old and useless members, who can neither be profitable to themselves nor others. They even make sport of the matter, and when any person is sent hither, would ask one of another, ‘What fault has he committed, what wrong has he done?’” We find later on the Llanthony monks complaining that they had not enough of this world’s goods to provide for a decent service, whilst their brethren at Gloucester revelled in luxury; all their treasures, and even their bells, having been taken away for the use of the new monastery. Another Llanthony monk thus contrasts the two institutions: “At Gloucester let active spirits reside, here contemplative. There let the pursuit of earthly riches find a home, here the love of heavenly delights. There let the concourse of people be enjoyed, here let the society of angels be entreated. There let the great ones of the earth be entertained, here the poor of Christ comforted. There, I say, be heard the din of action and debate, here the murmurings of those who read and pray.”

But to do justice to the Gloucester monks, it must be confessed that at a later period, but then only under the pressure of the scandal caused by the shameful neglect of the mother priory, they did exert themselves to improve the relations between the two houses, and put matters on a better footing. But too late; the days of monasteries were doomed in England.

Llanthony once belonged to Walter Savage

Landor, author and poet, and he lived in the tower of the ruins whilst a new house was being built for him on the estate, which, however, he never completed or occupied, for eventually, after spending a large fortune on the property, he left the neighbourhood for good. The perpetual gloom of the mountains seems to have oppressed his soul and to have settled on him. It was more than he could stand. It wants a strong man and a strong mind to dwell for a lengthened time thus in the heart of the mountains. There are many men who are actually oppressed after a while by the silence and desolation of the hills. To me they are always beautiful, often solemn, but never mournful. The moods of man are as various as the moods of Nature, but to live permanently in a narrow valley girt by mighty barrier mountains, with brooding clouds overhead, the greatest part of the year, requires a genuine inborn love of wild Nature that few possess, though many imagine they do who grow enthusiastic (in the society of genial companions) over the highlands in the summer-time.

Turner, it may be remembered, in his England and Wales series, has given us a charmingly poetic vision of misty hills,—a tumbling stream, with a ray of sunshine resting on a ruined tower. This he calls Llanthony. He might as well have called it anything else. It is a beautiful artist's conception, as lovely as a dream, but it is not Llanthony. The engraving reminds me of the anecdote of a certain man, who said of one of Turner's idealisations of

scenery, that he had dwelt at the spot all his life, and had seen it from every point of view—except Turner's. So in the engraving of Llanthony, in the England and Wales series, the forms of the mountains have not the faintest resemblance to the originals. For the sake of picturesque effect Turner has audaciously misplaced the little river and converted it into a mighty torrent. The ruins he has altered altogether (a trifle to him). This is all very well, as a matter of picture-making, but why call it Llanthony? Had Turner termed the engraving "A mountain scene," no one would have had a right to complain, but as a likeness of a place it is even worse than misleading, it is utterly false. Turner appears to have considered that he was entitled to take whatever license he chose in his topography. It is just the same in his drawing of "Kilchurn." His representation of the castle he calls by that name does not in the least resemble the actual one. Photography has done one great thing for us, it has made painters vastly more careful of their detail; we are no longer content to be put off with poetic fancies for existing places. A little romancing may be conceded; but in Llanthony Turner has not romanced a little, he has invented everything. A friend of mine was so charmed with Llanthony, according to Turner, that he made a long journey to the spot, and returned home with his faith in Turner's topographical truthfulness rudely shaken.

CHAPTER XVIII

The vale of Ewias—An evening drive—"Main roadmen"—Raglan Castle—Show places—An ancient Tudor mansion—Mitchel-troy—Village stocks—Travellers' tales—A medieval gateway—An old-time structure—Monmouth—The Wye—A lonely way-side cross—Goodrich Castle.

So long had we lingered round and about Llanthony, that the evening came upon us by surprise. We had spent the greater part of the day there, yet it seemed so short a time, we could well have spent a week, or more. The deep peace, the untold restfulness, and the spell of loneliness of the once sacred place seemed to have entered into our very souls. Llanthony, enclosed in mountain quietude, gave us a feeling of remoteness not to be conveyed in words. Whilst there we had been half lost in a delicious day-dream, but we were awakened out of it on glancing upward and noticing that the sky in the west was growing golden, whilst the sun was slowly sinking behind the purple hills. The pleasures of the day were nearly over, but a memory of it would ever remain to us, a something that we could never lose.

How many delightful memories of charmed spots did we not take back with us! What a gallery of mind-pictures did we not collect that journey! Often

has one or more of that treasure-store come suddenly up before me when walking along the busy streets of London ; and how refreshed have I been by the very recollection ! Bodily I have been in Regent Street, with a fashionable yet commonplace crowd around me, but in spirit I have been far away amongst the heather-clad mountains, or beside the sounding sea. But of all the lovely spots kind fate led us to this pilgrimage, my mind most frequently reverts to lonely Llanthony. How pathetic are its ruined, crumbling walls ; more impressive desolated and devastated thus than when the stately abbey rose out of that wild wilderness in the full glory of its Gothic prime.

As the stern grandeur of a Gothic tower
Awes us less deeply in its morning hour,
Than when the shades of Time serenely fall
On every broken arch and ivied wall.

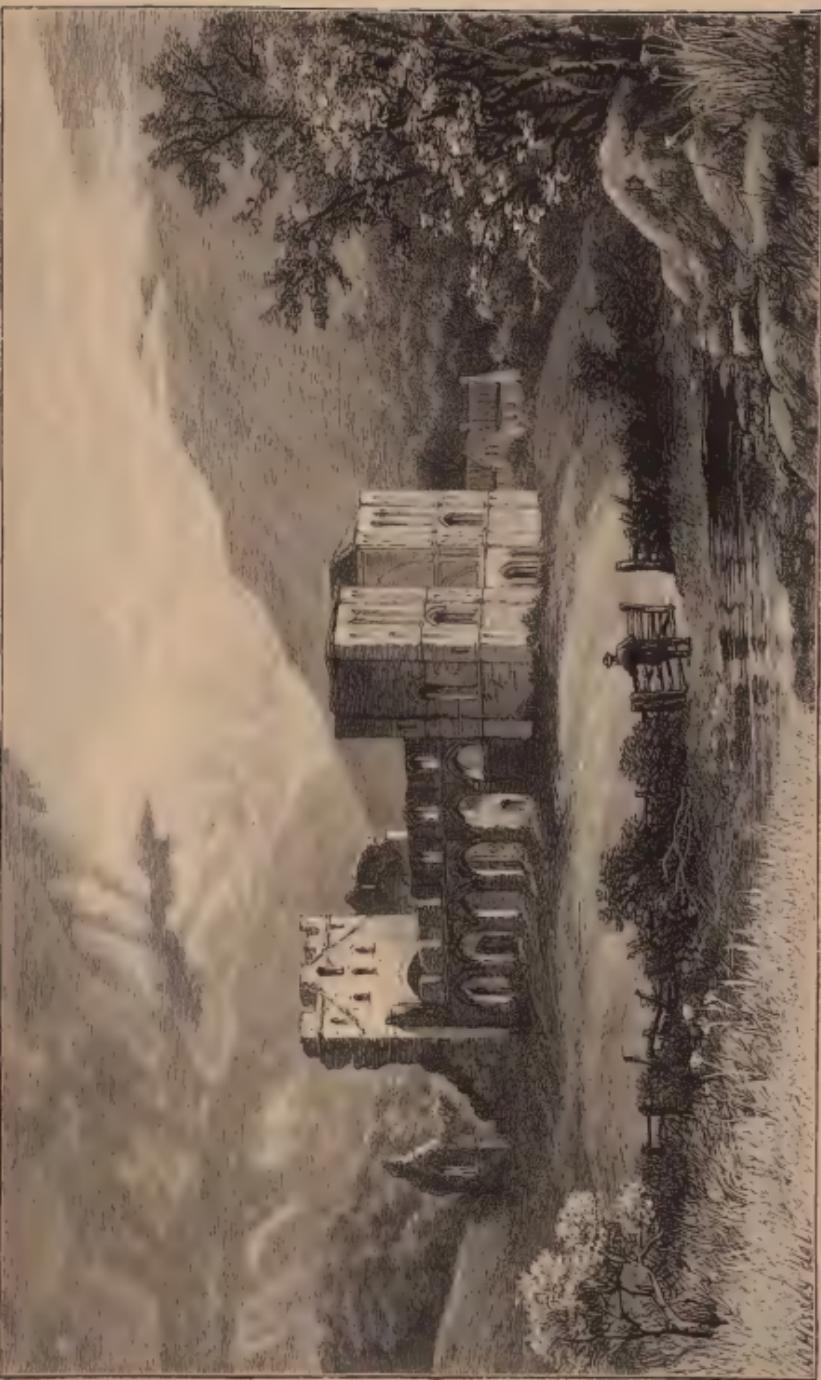
As the day was slowly drawing to an end, it was manifestly high time to take our departure and bid a reluctant farewell to the old historic ruin. Moreover, to take a sudden jump from the poetic to the practical side of life, we found that our day in the keen air of this upland solitude had given us an alarming appetite, or at least I did, and we had ordered a dinner to await our return to our inn. In truth I was getting hungry, and we had a good ten miles of rough road between us and our dinner. "How can you be so unromantic as to talk about such a worldly thing ?" said my wife. So I said nothing more about such a vulgar want, but I thought a good deal all the same, and munched a

biscuit with as much outward contentment as I could command. But how very dry that biscuit seemed. Biscuits are not satisfying when you are really hungry.

We had a lovely vision of Llanthony as we left. The sun's rays were resting softly on the hoary ruins, bathing them in a tender, warm glow, and casting long blue shadows from the trees around. The crests of the opposite hills were ruddy in the lingering light, but on the other side the mountain slopes were all steeped in a solemn gray gloom ; and just peeping over their rugged summits, which showed sharply against the luminous sky, we caught a glimpse of the pale ghostly crescent of the rising moon. The little river too below, in many a tranquil bend and stilly pool, reflected down to the dark earth the glowing glory above, and as it wound in and out along the valley far away, it looked like a ribbon of gleaming gold. Oh the peaceful beauty of that hour ; it was entrancing ! But still I hurried the horses along, remarking that it would never do to be benighted on such a lonesome, hilly road. I was wondering all the time if we should be very late for dinner. You simply cannot do much romancing upon dry biscuits.

How high, as we drove along, seemed the cliffs and crags in the gloaming, towering above us on either hand. Little wonder that this valley of Ewias, as it was termed of old, should have been selected as a place set apart from the intrusion of the outer world, though the mountains did not impress us with the immense height attributed to them by

LIAANTHONY ABBEY



Michael Drayton, the little-read Poet Laureate, in his *Polyolbion*, who sings thus of the spot in that chief work of his :—

'Mongst Hatterill's lofty hills, that with the clouds are crown'd,
The valley of Ewias lies, immersed so deep and round,
As they below that see the mountains rise so high
Might think the straggling herds were grazing in the sky :
Which in such shape of solitude doth bear,
As Nature from the first intended it for prayer.

In the gathering gloom, that crept on apace, the mountains around us loomed up grandly. There was an indefinable sense of mystery about them. In the uncertain light the smaller features of the landscape were lost in the greater; trivial details that in the garish daytime take away from the solemn aspect of the hills were all blotted out; the height of the crags seemed strangely magnified; and the dim, vague uncertainty of everything gave an added majesty to the rugged outline of peak and precipice.

We drove on in silence through that darksome valley. The road was rough, the daylight gone, our road could only be traced a short distance ahead, the autumnal night-wind blew chilly; so that we were not sorry when at last we found ourselves safely back in Abergavenny.

The next morning turned out cloudy. No rain fell, but the weather looked threatening; our aneroid had fallen somewhat; and, worst of all, the weather forecast prophesied, "Fair warm weather,"—for we were at Abergavenny back again to civilisation, as represented by a morning paper, though not a

London one. Now when the weather forecast is decidedly favourable we generally look out for storms. Then we sought the ostler and asked his opinion, for we have found that ostlers (the amount of whose tip depends on their pleasing) are always very willing to oblige your wishes about the weather. It gratifies you and costs them nothing. If you desire a fine day, as of course you do, they are sure it will not rain; or if it is raining, they are equally sure that it will clear presently, which is very comforting. On this occasion the ostler informed us that, "when you can see the top of the Sugarloaf quite free from cloud at nine o'clock in the morning, you may know that it will be fine till the evening." Now at that hour the Sugarloaf was free from cloud, though the other mountains around were capped with mists; but these, we learnt, "don't count."

The dog-cart came in for a good deal of admiration as it stood at the door of the Angel ready to start. "Just the very thing for the road," one gentleman remarked to another who was standing to see us off, and we duly appreciated the compliment. Yes, and now it has been with us some hundreds of miles, I really do not know in what way we could improve it.

From Abergavenny we had decided to drive on to Monmouth, taking Raglan Castle *en route*. All the way we had a glorious road,—wide, level, and well kept; trotting-ground every inch of it. This was the first day for a long time past that we had no hill to contend with; but still we were sorry to leave the mountains behind, with their cloud-loving

summits, their rugged rock scenery, their falls and torrents, their shady glens and deep ravines.

Leaving Abergavenny, the character of the scenery was changed : rich meadows took the place of barren boulder-strewn moors, great elms with mighty spreading branches that of the graceful mountain ash, and for the purple of heather and the gold of gorse we had the restful, if slightly monotonous, mingled greens of many meadows, trees, and hedges. It was all very soft and beautiful, but after our long wandering amongst the hills at first the prospect seemed perhaps a little featureless. Our eyes had not got accustomed to the cramped feeling of the bounding hedges which made a sort of gigantic chess-board of the landscape. The better the land, the more the scenery suffers in this respect.

That day, for a wonderful and welcome change, we actually found ourselves in a country of legible milestones ; and the corner of each byroad was provided with a guide-post, that besides pointing the way with an index finger in the good old-fashioned manner, had the distances plainly marked thereon.

This most desirable, though seldom existing, state of affairs was in startling contrast with the miles upon miles of roads we had traversed without a single milestone or a solitary finger-post, and of other roads that had finger-posts without arms, and milestones with the lettering thereon completely weathered away. We were delighted with this new departure ; nothing is more annoying on a pouring wet day, when travelling by road in an unknown

country, than to be pulled up at some cross ways uncertain which is the right one to take. Of course you can consult your map, if you have one with you; but even then, unless you are careful, you may make a mistake.

Attached to the walls of one or two cottages we passed we noticed painted boards with "Main Roadman" inscribed thereon. Quite a new calling to us. We presumed it was the duty of the "main roadman" to keep certain sections of the highway in order, and to see that the milestones and finger-posts are properly maintained. I wish there were main roadmen all over England.

Then, as we drove on past fields and woods, with occasional peeps of blue hills beyond, and now and again of the winding silvery Usk, we suddenly found ourselves in the pretty little village of Raglan, famous for its castle. Baiting our horses at the rural hostel, we set out afoot in search of the ruins, which are finely situated on some rising ground a short distance from the village. Here we found, in great contrast to Llanthony, that there was a wicket-gate and so much a head to pay before we were allowed through it; nor was this quite all, for besides, there was a large notice that there was an extra charge of twenty-one shillings for photographers who might wish to take views of the castle. We were thankful therefore that we had not encumbered ourselves with our camera. Fortunately there was no stated fee for artists sketching. Poor old stronghold, what an indignity! Fancy the palace-fortress of the proud and brave

old Marquis of Worcester turned into a shilling peep-show!

The ruins of Raglan are perhaps the most picturesque in England. The hexagonal keep, strangely placed apart from the main structure outside the walls, is both beautiful as a bit of building, and I think unique in situation. It seemed to us, however, that it was a mistake to have the keep thus away from the rest of the castle, as it was thereby useless to aid in the defence, for naturally of course an enemy would select to attack the castle from the other side. And so it was during the siege by the Parliamentary forces that the keep was of no service to the defenders, as it would have been had it only been in the centre of the fortress, for Fairfax proceeded to attack Raglan on its keepless and weakest side, as any good general would.

Raglan is interesting as being the latest development of an English feudal stronghold, combining a luxurious residence with the strength of a castle. It may perhaps be tersely described as a Norman fortress Tudorified (if I may be allowed the expression). Strong without and graceful within, it happily combined both sternness and beauty,—a fit abode alike for warlike knight or my lady of high degree.

It will be remembered that the stout-hearted Marquis of Worcester nobly defended his castle of Raglan with a garrison of eight hundred men against the Parliamentary forces sent against it by Cromwell. When summoned by Sir Thomas Fairfax to sur-

render, the aged Marquis (for he was over eighty at the time) bravely made answer : " I make choice, if it so please God, to die nobly rather than surrender." Curiously enough, a reply couched in almost similar terms was sent by the commander of Goodrich Castle when challenged by the general of the besieging forces of the English Parliament. But in each case both Marquis and commander surrendered without dying ; for when, after a prolonged siege, Fairfax had approached his outworks to within sixty yards of the castle, the Marquis surrendered, with one of his sons, sundry nobles, four colonels, over eighty captains, sixteen lieutenants, six cornets, four ensigns, and more than fifty esquires, besides common soldiers. The Marquis of Worcester sacrificed everything for his king, but his son received no reward. " On the Restoration, he, if any man, might have expected substantial proofs of royal gratitude. There were honours and titles and solid cash for profligates and for boon companions, but there was nothing in the exchequer to compensate for the ruin of Raglan . . . he was even obliged to surrender the patent of a dukedom which had been granted to him, on the plea that it was ' to the prejudice of his peers.' "

Raglan has had, like most English castles, a stormy ending to its active history. It seems to have been the fate of these old strongholds to be held for the king, and after a longer or shorter siege to be surrendered to and be dismantled by the Parliamentarian troops. The history of one is the history of all, with slight variations as to details.

From Raglan we drove through a beautifully wooded and pleasantly undulating country. There was nothing much to remark on the way till we came to a milestone, which informed us that we were five miles from Monmouth and one hundred and thirty-six from London by direct road. Here, in a finely timbered park, we caught a glimpse through century-old trees of an ancient Tudor mansion,—a picture in stone with its clustering chimneys, time-toned walls, high-pitched roof, and quaint bell-turret. The man who built that house in the long ago built more than a stately home, he built a poem. The name of the charming old place I do not know, as there was no one about to ask, and our map did not help us much.

Soon after this we caught sight in the valley below us of a pretty village, with a gray church embowered in trees. To the village our road led us, and we found that it was called Mitcheltroy. Here we discovered by the wayside, just outside the churchyard wall, a relic of the past that greatly interested us, being nothing less than the ancient village stocks, in an excellent state of preservation, with a post having two half-rings of iron attached thereto. Whether this was originally a whipping-post or not, I cannot say, but it is not unlike one. According to the corporation records of Monmouth, the punishment of whipping was frequently resorted to during the eighteenth century, and the stocks during that period were in much demand for drunken offenders. As an explanation of the perfect state of these stocks, we were told a story afterwards

which I repeat here, though I have no means of testing its accuracy; all that I can say is, that it may be true. Travellers by road hear such varieties of tales and curious items of news from chance acquaintances on the way, and especially from talkative strangers at the bars of country inns, that one has to accept them for what they may be worth. What a peculiar store of unwritten history of county families have I not thus gathered,—enough, were I a novel-writer, to set me up for years with plots and materials from which to weave romances in three volumes. And let me remark that in making this statement I am in no way romancing. Indeed, so startling are some of the stories I have been told, that were I to repeat them I should expect my readers to put them down as the creations of my brain. But I have wandered from my story of the stocks. Well, then, according to the account given to us, some time during this century (I have forgotten the exact date, though it was supplied) a man was taken before the magistrates for being drunk, and was sentenced to a fine of five shillings or four hours in the stocks. Now it happened that even at that time the stocks were decayed, and out of repair, and therefore unfit for their intended purpose. Fully aware of this fact, the delinquent selected the stocks. Thereupon that instrument of punishment had to be put in order at a considerable expense; but on the completion of the work the man paid his fine, and had a laugh at the authorities, and the stocks have not been used since. At the commencement of this book will be found an illustration

of the stocks at Mitcheltroy. It will be seen from this that these mark a certain advance of civilisation, in that there is a seat provided for the offender, and so he had not to sit on the hard or damp ground as the case might be. What a time the boys of the village must have had when there was any one in the stocks!

The little church of Mitcheltroy has been well restored, and has a cared-for look that is very pleasing. Entering the quiet God's-acre by a pretty lich-gate, we noticed amongst the graves the shaft of an ancient cross, ornamented at the sides. This is now surmounted by a modern carved stone angel, with sword in hand, and wings meeting at a point overhead. I wonder what medieval carver it was who first suggested this, now most orthodox, but for all very material conception of an angel in the form of a woman with the wings of a bird. But though the neatly-ordered church pleased us, there was one thing in the village we observed that somewhat grated on our feelings, namely, the steps to one of the cottages were made manifestly out of an old tombstone, cut into three pieces for the purpose; for we could still trace on the steps, though somewhat worn with the tread of feet, a portion of an inscription beginning "Here lyeth the body of," etc. But, as a stranger once remarked to me when I noticed on a former tour a somewhat similar misuse of old gravestones, "What does it matter? it will be all the same in a thousand years, or less, —certainly in ten thousand. It is only an affair of time." Truly, but I do not see where the

excuse comes in for robbing the dead of their memorials.

On to Monmouth there was nothing of special interest. Just before entering that town we passed a restored market cross at the corner of the road, but so much repaired as to be almost a new one. There is a charm in age that no mere modern reproduction of past forms can possibly give. It is a grievous thing to see how some of our churches are so thoroughly restored that the only ancient thing left to them is their history.

Then a bend in the road led us over a hoary stone bridge of three arches that crosses the little river Monnow here, and we found ourselves in the ancient town of Monmouth. On this bridge stands an old gray, weather-worn, and crumbling fortified gateway, a historical monument of the never-returning past, when many of our towns were surrounded by moated walls and watch-towers. This venerable structure gives a peculiar character to the approach to Monmouth in this direction; and as we drove beneath its dark-shadowing and time-stained arch in the mystic evening light, it was not difficult to picture to ourselves what the approach to a medieval fortified city was like. For the gathering grayness of night blotted out, or at any rate hid much of the commonplace look of the mean modern buildings that have grown up around the bridge. Next morning on visiting the spot, for the purpose of making a sketch, we found how greatly we were indebted to the twilight for softening down the harsher features of the ugly surround-

OLD BRIDGE AT MONMOUTH



ings of the old romantic bridge and gateway. What a pity it is that so picturesque a structure—a record preserved to us in stone of the vanished past—should have such an inharmonious setting. We had indeed some difficulty in selecting a point of view for our sketch, so as to include only that which was picturesque, but eventually we succeeded fairly well.

Our hotel at Monmouth was curiously stuck away in a corner of Agincourt Square. It was quaintly situated, but very cosy; the fare was good, the charge moderate, and the stabling excellent, so we had no cause to complain of our quarters. In a recess at the top of the town hall—a plain building that faces the square—is a figure in full armour, coloured proper, with the following inscription below:—

HENRY V

Born at Monmouth

August IX.

MCCCLXXXVII

The good people of Monmouth are evidently proud of the accident of circumstances that distinguished their town by the birth of the hero of Agincourt, “too famous to live long.” Henry V. was born in Monmouth Castle, of which now but some crumbling walls remain, yet sufficient to attest its former importance, if not magnificence. The situation of the ruins is very commanding. A pointed window in these with some broken tracery at the top is pointed out as belonging to the room in which the hero was born.

Around Monmouth in all directions the country

is distinctly beautiful, but the town itself has not much to show the traveller, except the ruined castle and the ancient gateway on the Monnow bridge, already mentioned, and of which I have given an illustration. Monmouth, however, will well repay a visit as an excellent and convenient centre for exploring the interesting country around. According to the poet Gray, Monmouth is one of the five most beautiful counties in England. The far-famed Wye valley is of great loveliness. This goes without saying. But besides the Wye, that runs past Monmouth, there is much worth seeing in the neighbouring country. Unfortunately the attractions of the romantic river seem to monopolise the attentions of travellers, so that the other beauties of the locality are neglected,—beauties that but for the counter-allurements of the Wye would probably be more considered and sought after. Perhaps though, after all, it is well that there are still some charming spots left unvisited by the modern tourist; and the guide-book compilers have my blessing for not having made them public property. It is pleasant to feel that they have not yet exhausted England. I know one of the loveliest glens in Wales, a romance of rocky scenery, with a tumbling stream, a fine fall, and overhanging woods, that is not even mentioned in any handbook I have come across. An artist who paints most of his pictures in and around it once in a confiding mood revealed to me this secret haunt of his. We both sketched there for many a day undisturbed by any tourist, and on showing to a friend one of my drawings of the spot, as

faithful as I could make it, he exclaimed, "It's too beautiful to be true." There is a freshness and a peculiar charm about scenery that has not been endlessly written about and photographed times innumerable till every one knows it by heart.

On the whole, we were wonderfully fortunate in our weather this journey. The morning we left Monmouth was another of those days, sunny, bright, and warm, yet without any glare, that causes one to think very kindly of the much-abused English climate, and to forgive, if not exactly to forget, its winter failings of fog and dreariness.

At first for a few miles our road was delightfully level, and we spun along at a merry pace, for we had planned a long stage that day through Ross on as far as Gloucester, nearly thirty miles, and we did not know what might be in store for us farther ahead. It happened that we were wise in "making 'way' whilst the sun shone," for we had, as it turned out, a very hilly road in parts, and consequently a good deal of walking to do. But the scenery till within a short distance of Gloucester was of the highest order; indeed, our whole stage was a succession of lovely landscapes, charming for their variety of hill and dale, of rocky cliff and winding river, of woodland height and tree-girt road, of meadow and orchard land, with a ruined castle and priory, two quaint old towns, and a score or more of pretty hamlets and countless humble cottage homes.

At first we drove alongside of the Wye, then after a time we had a long and stiff climb up-hill, through a forest of firs, fragrant with balmy, resinous

odours, so peculiar to the pine. And what far-reaching vistas we had down the many-pillared recesses of the straight, red-stemmed, and stately trees. It was like a gigantic Nature's Alhambra. As we mounted the hill we had charming peeps of the river far below, winding through cliffs and wooded banks, with a faint glimmer of blue hills beyond.

At the top of the hill we came to a lonely way-side cross, raised on a tall shaft that was supported by steps. There was no inscription on the cross, as far as we could discover, so I am unable to say why it was erected on this remote spot,—nor was I in any way enlightened by the answer of an intelligent(?) native who chanced to be passing. "Shure I don't know," he said; "it has been there as long as I can remember." We could have told him that from the look of it. Then we had a long run down a very steep hill; so steep that it was all we could do to prevent the carriage running on the horses, even with the brake hard on. At the bottom of the descent we came to the pretty village of Whitchurch, the name of which was plainly painted on the post-office there. This good old fashion, that still exists in some places, of exhibiting the names of country towns and hamlets by a board attached to the post-offices (a fashion that originated and prevailed in the coaching days) is very useful as well as interesting to the strange traveller by road. It saves the trouble of getting a map out or pulling up to ask questions. Then we had another welcome stretch of level road on to the village of Goodrich

where we pulled up under the shelter of some trees, and proceeded on foot to inspect its ruined castle, situated on the crest of a hill overlooking the Wye, and affording a grand panoramic view of that silvery stream meandering through the green valley below.

Goodrich Castle is a very interesting ruin. It is picturesque in itself as well as happy in its commanding position, and it has no mean buildings around to detract from its beauty. It stands alone, as a castle should,—a gray, weather-worn, and time-rent ruin, sufficiently ruinous to appeal to one's romantic and poetic sympathies, yet not too much decayed to lose its archaeological interest. We found the inevitable guide at the castle in the shape of a rheumatic old body, but she did not trouble us much, possibly her rheumatism was too bad; nor did she, worthy old soul, speak unbidden, but simply answered our questions in a quiet way, and told us all we wished to know and no more. My blessing on her, for she left us at peace to explore the ruins as we pleased. Such guides are rare; for as a rule they repeat, parrot-fashion, a long jargon of particulars, with often self-invented stories added (for if there are no actual traditions connected with a ruin or an ancient home, the pressing claims of tourists cause them to be ready-made for the occasion; they expect them for their tip—and get them,—the supply is equal to the demand). In the courtyard of Goodrich Castle we found two artists busily at work,—the first we had come upon during our trip.

The best preserved part of the castle is its fine old Norman keep, the walls of which are nine feet thick. The original entrance to this keep, for the sake of extra security, was some height above ground, and was reached by a ladder. Below were the dungeons, damp and dark, for there are no signs of any provision having been made to admit light to them. In a chamber on the first floor of one of the flanking towers are some curious and clever carvings on the walls. We could clearly make out a hawk, a possible partridge, a peacock, as well as two rabbits, also a more elaborate attempt at a figure, with a hawk in one hand and a dog at his foot. According to our guide, this chamber was supposed to have been a state prison, and these carvings to have been done by state prisoners. If so, they must all have been excellent artists,—not a very probable fact. It appeared to us more likely that these skilful carvings were done by one man; and if so, they show how long he must have been confined there. It would be interesting to know who he was. In this chamber is also a rusty iron bracket, the ancient use of which it is difficult to conjecture,—possibly it upheld a lamp. The banqueting hall must have been a grand apartment. Those old warriors loved feasting as well as fighting! For ladies there is a withdrawing-room, doubtless originally made as comfortable and elegant as the exigencies of castle-building would allow. Of course the comparatively large windows of this look inwards to the courtyard, so as not to weaken the defences of the outer walls. This room has a pretty stone hooded fireplace, with

fluted corbels. Architects might do worse than copy this.

A special feature of the castle is a long narrow passage cut in the outer wall (that to admit of it must be at least twelve feet thick) leading to a loop-holed chamber that commands the approach and drawbridge. This is entered from the courtyard, so that the chamber could be held even were the portcullis in the hands of the enemy. There is a deep moat that runs round a portion of the castle, on the side away from the river. From its position on the top of an eminence this must have been a dry one. The walls of the castle are buttressed to a considerable height, manifestly as a precaution against undermining. Probably the stone obtained in excavating the moat was employed in the building.

It was during his visit here, when making a tour of the Wye in 1798, that Wordsworth said he met a little girl "whose beauty made me glad," and who was the heroine of his familiar little poem "We are Seven."

CHAPTER XIX

A useless signpost—Rural folk—Flanesford Priory—Ross, its church and surroundings—A beautiful valley—May Hill—A romantic drive—Gloucester city and cathedral—An accommodating verger—A summer-house up in the trees—Cheltenham—Waiters—A brief for driving tours.

REJOINING the dog-cart, we drove down-hill from Goodrich village, and crossed the Wye by a fine stone bridge,—for which convenience we were charged a shilling. At the other end of the bridge the road branched to the right and left. At the junction of the ways was a signpost, but having only one arm, and that pointing in the direction from which we had come. On this “To Monmouth” was plainly inscribed, a perfectly useless guide of course to any one travelling *from* Monmouth. As we were not sure which road to take, and to save the trouble of getting our map out, we pulled up and asked of the woman who had received our toll. “I’m sure I don’t know,” she replied; “I’ve never been to Ross in my life.” The woman was very civil, and seemed quite sorry that she could not give us the desired information; indeed, she expressed herself so—in answer, I presume, to our look of amazement. Yet she lived in the cottage there, not more than four miles from Ross, and collected the tolls

from travellers to that town, as well as elsewhere of course; but still her ignorance appeared almost unaccountable. However, when travelling by road one does occasionally meet with astonishing experiences, but seldom do you find pleasant manner combined with local ignorance. On thinking the matter over as we drove quietly along, it struck me as a possible explanation of the puzzling problem that the woman was a stranger in the land, and had only recently come to the spot; but why, oh why, did she not say so? Rural folk, however, are at times curiously stupid. I remember once when asking my road across country, a native, had I followed his directions, would have sent me miles round out of the nearest way. This I discovered from glancing at my map, his reason for so directing me being that there were four cross-roads on the nearest route, and he thought that when I came to these I might take the wrong one!

Just before crossing the Wye we passed the slight ruins of Flanesford Priory. All that remains of the religious house is now converted into a barn. The situation of the ruins by the side of the Wye is very picturesque. Those old monks had an eye for scenery surely, for away from towns, wherever there are the remains of an abbey, there the scenery is certain to be beautiful, and a pleasant stream or river close at hand.

On to Ross the road was very pretty, but without any special feature of interest. Ross itself is a queer old-fashioned town of steep streets, finely placed on a height overlooking the Wye. Here we felt that

we were on well-known tourist ground. Though we had never been to Ross before, the town and the country around had a familiar look to us, from having seen them represented in photographs and pictures, to say nothing of illustrated advertisements. Of course Ross is fully described in the guide-books, so that we knew what we ought to see there, and in what order to view the Lions of the place, what to admire, and what not to admire, as well as the past and present history of the town ; and though it is a very beautiful spot, it had consequently not the charm of freshness to us. We knew that we could make no discovery there, everything near and around worth seeing, or otherwise, has been catalogued, auction-fashion.

We did the Prospect Walk, and duly admired the views from the proper points of view. Somehow it seemed that we had seen them all before. Then we went to the church. This is one of the things you must see at Ross. That is the worst of a famous place ; it would never do to confess to our friends that we had been here and not inspected the church and the celebrated trees that grow inside it,—at least we were told they did, though as a matter of fact they are dead stumps. Reaching the churchyard, our attention was arrested by a crumbling monument that briefly told its own tale. It ran thus—

Ross—Plague
An^o Domⁱ 1637
Burials 315.

More pathetic these few simple words than any lengthened inscription could possibly be. Whilst

reading this, a woman, whom we took for the wife of the clerk, key in hand, discovered us. She was manifestly accustomed to tourists, for she at once accosted us. "I suppose you want to see over the church." Then, without waiting to learn whether we did or not, she continued, "If you'll follow me, please," and proceeded forthwith towards the church door; and so we meekly allowed ourselves to be shown over the old edifice. We were of course taken to the two tree-trunks. A Virginia creeper was being trained over them to make them look a little green, for they were quite dead to all appearance,—killed, we were told, by American tourists, who plucked the leaves and chipped bits of the bark away when the clerk was not observing, as mementoes of their visit. "They came in large parties, you see," said the woman; "then a party would divide, and one lot would ask the clerk to explain something on a tomb in another portion of the building, and whilst he was away, those around the trees would help themselves to what they wanted. You've to be terribly sharp to be up to the Americans." But what interested us most in the church was the fine altar-tomb to Sir John Ruddhall, representing the brave knight in recumbent effigy, clad in armour, holding his wife lovingly by the hand; for her effigy lies beside that of her husband. This pretty and poetic idea pleased us much.

Between Ross and Gloucester our road took us through, or rather over, a hilly country,—the scenery in parts well meriting the often misappropriated title of romantic. After a few miles of trotting-

ground, we had a long stiff climb, then we had an easy spin down-hill with a fine view ahead. During our descent we noticed an old half-timbered house, the first we had come upon during our homeward journey. This was a striking change from the plain but substantial buildings of stony Wales, and was in perfect harmony with the softly wooded scenery around. For a while now we had an undulating road that led us through a lonely country,—we neither met, nor overtook, nor saw a soul till we reached a very sleepy-looking village, where we passed a beggar; but as there was no one else about, his business did not appear to be very flourishing. He did not even get a penny out of us, to his manifest disappointment, for his manner too plainly suggested the professional to arouse our sympathies. Then we had another long stretch of collar-work, the country growing wilder every half-mile we mounted. To the left of us May Hill (973 feet high, according to our map) now rose boldly up against the bright noon sky. On the top of this hill stands a clump of dark old fir trees that give it quite a special character, and make it a landmark for miles around. The hilliness of the country hereabouts surprised us; we had not expected to find such a very hilly road in this part of England.

At last we came to the end of our climbing for the day, and we were not sorry for the fact. From the highest point we had a delightful run of a couple of miles or more all down-hill, our road winding as it descended through a narrow wooded

glen. We had tree-clad heights and cliffs on either side of us. It only wanted a tumbling mountain stream, some rugged boulders here and there, a gray old bridge or two, and perhaps a weather-stained mill, to be a perfect reproduction of a Welsh ravine. We were quite unprepared for anything of the kind,—our journey that day was certainly full of delightful surprises.

At the end of the descent we had a long level road all the way into Gloucester. It was a treat at last to be able to indulge in a good trot, and we took advantage of the opportunity to rattle along apace. It was very pleasurable to find ourselves once more moving rapidly through the country, overtaking now and again a slow wain or creeping carrier's cart; and how delightful it was to experience the steady swing of the dog-cart, that told the speed at which we were travelling; and how musically sounded the horn on the still evening air as a corner was quickly turned, or a lumbering waggon warned to clear the road. As we sped along it was a relief to know that there were no more hills to encounter that day, for we could trace our road all the way ahead through a flat pastoral land to our night's destination at Gloucester. Right in front of us, a dim mass of gray on the distant horizon, grandly loomed up the old cathedral pile, towering above the city with a lordly, masterful air,—the very embodiment in stone of the medieval Church, whose kingdom was "of this world."

It happened to be a fair day, and we found the

narrow streets of Gloucester unpleasantly crowded as we drove in. We were strangers to crowds, and after our long wanderings on country roads, and our experience of remote rural towns and half-deserted hamlets, what a large place Gloucester seemed! We were quite unaccustomed to the bustle of cities, the throng of people, the rattling of tramcars, and the hurrying of cabs. Even the horses, tired as they were with their long and heavy journey, pricked up their ears and attempted to prance about at the novel sounds. We were not sorry to drive into the comparative quiet of the inn-yard of the Bell, an old-fashioned hostelry, erst a famous posting and coaching house, and wherein modern travellers by road may still take their ease, even as their port-loving grandfathers did. And greater praise than this to an hotel can no man give.

After our long and tiring day's journey, we determined to give our horses a good rest at Gloucester, and to proceed in the cool of the following evening only as far as Cheltenham, an easy level run of nine miles,—quite child's play after the hilly and severe stages of the last week or so.

The next morning we devoted to seeing the grand old cathedral,—in my opinion, after Canterbury and York, the most interesting in England. Let me at once frankly state that I am not going to attempt any detailed description of this famous fane,—that is the special province of the handbook (of which the number is legion), wherein may be

found the most minute particulars of the building, even to the height and length and width of the nave, chancel, choir, chapels, crypt, tower, and various other parts, together with the past history of the pile from the earliest times down to the present day. How can I compete with such a record ? I merely venture to briefly make mention of one or two things that specially interested us. Entering, then, this magnificent and stately fane—a miracle in architecture, a poem in stone—we were impressed by the majestic massiveness of the Norman nave, with its mighty rounded pillars and silent solemn gloom. The verger who showed us over went into details as to the dates of the building and so forth, but we cared not to follow him ; the impression the place had upon us made mere details seem trivial. How grandly those men of old built : they gave to the dead stone life and meaning ; their saints and demons seem almost struggling to speak. They believed in their own creations ; they worked for love, and loved their work, and wrought in a temper of unquestioning faith with a passion now long lost for symbolism and mysticism.

What a chapter of history in stone is this glorious cathedral of Gloucester ! It is the marvellous outcome of the genius and piety of succeeding generations of great men, some of whom were great and good, and some of whom were great only. From the stern strong Norman work to the light and graceful Early English, what a contrast ! From mere massiveness to the soaring

glory of the Gothic prime, with its pointed arches, embroidered stones, and lace-like tracery, what a transition from simple grandeur to perfected beauty!

The verger pointed out to us, amongst many other things, as we followed him along, listening more or less attentively to his often-repeated particulars, two curious carved figures, easily to be missed by the casual visitor, that projected in an apparently meaningless manner from the walls. These, he told us, were the likenesses of the master mason and his apprentice who built the tower in 1457. The same authority informed us that Gloucester possesses the most beautiful choir roof, the largest window, and the finest cloisters of any cathedral in England, as well as a unique pilgrims' pulpit,—from which the pilgrims were addressed before they brought their offerings to the shrine of Edward II. We were also shown four old cope or vestment chests of 1410; the only others being at York and Salisbury.

The Lady Chapel, one of the last works of the monks, robbed of its ornaments, sculpture, and gorgeous colouring, has now a bare look. The ninety-six empty niches therein were once filled with silver images, the walls were more or less covered with storied paintings, and richly gilt besides. One can now only faintly realise what it must have been when in the fulness of its pristine glory. Then we were led up to the Whispering Gallery,—in reality a long passage beneath the great east window, which forms a sort of gigantic speaking-tube. The verger

stood at one end and whispered something loudly to us who remained at the other, which we heard quite distinctly; but we did not come to Gloucester Cathedral to inspect wonders in acoustics, and I am afraid that we rather disappointed our civil guide by our want of enthusiasm respecting the gallery. "Why," he said, "I had a gentleman here the other day, and he said that it was the best thing in the cathedral. It's unique, sir, unique!" "Unique" was a word for which that worthy verger had a manifest weakness. I know not how many times he said it to us. We got quite used to it at last, and once fore-stalled him in the use of the adjective. After that he did not employ the term again, but remarked in a half-apologetic tone that he showed "lots of Americans over the building, and they like things unique." "And so they get them," we added. "Well, sir, you see I tries to please everybody." That verger had studied human nature to a purpose. We suggested a new term to him to give a little variety to his descriptions,—namely, "time-hallowed." I wonder whether he has profited by it!

Next we descended to the ancient and gloomy Norman crypt, the oldest part of the edifice, the approximate date of it being 1080. Then we left the interior of the cathedral to inspect the beautiful cloisters, the finest as well as the most perfect in England. These are not open to wind and weather, as is usually the case, but the arched spaces are filled in with stained glass. The fan-tracery vaulting above is also very effective. This kind of ornamented stone roofing is essentially English, it having

originated with the monks of Gloucester in an attempt to produce a roof not liable to be destroyed by fire as are those of wood,—a destructive conflagration having more than once made sad havoc of the timber roofing of their abbey. Here in the cloisters is a long recess, lighted from above by a series of small traceried windows. This was the monks' lavatory, and, according to our verger, the only complete one left in the country. Another "unique" feature of Gloucester Cathedral! Along the stone trough, that still exists *in situ*, water used to flow continually. On the other side of the passage is a place for towels. In another part of the cloisters is the *Scriptorium*. This consists of a series of recesses where the monks copied MSS. Our verger explained to us that in all other *Scriptoriums* the walled divisions that divided the spaces wherein the monks sat were pierced with holes, so that the abbot might see at a glance if they were all at work, or if any were idling. These spy-holes, it appears, are wanting here. This speaks well for the integrity of the Gloucester monks. Our verger impressed this fact upon us as though he had a personal interest in the reputation of the old monastery.

On our return through the cathedral we were shown a fine mural monument sculptured by Flaxman, to a family who lost their lives in a shipwreck. This represents, in allegory, the sea giving up its dead. But the marble sea was thick and dark with dust, which suggested to us that some of the monuments would be better for a little cleaning. But the verger seemed horrified at our views. Now I cannot see any

virtue in dust or dirt, not even the dust of ages, or wherein it should be considered sacred,—but then I am not a verger. I remember once getting into sad trouble with one of these gentlemen because I dared, forsooth, wipe away with my handkerchief some dust from off an old brass, the better to read the inscription thereon. I know better now; I simply blow it off,—the sin is in wiping it away. This monument completed our inspection of the cathedral. "Now, sir," exclaimed the verger, "I hope I've given you satisfaction." We knew what this meant, so we slipped a silver coin into his ready hand, with the remark that we hoped that we had given him satisfaction; and he was pleased to reply that we had.

We were now left in peace, and quietly mused to ourselves in the dim, solemn light of the vast stone pile, raised to the glory of God by hands long since gone to their rest. As we stood silently thoughtful there, lost in admiration of the majesty of the vast interior, with its vanishing perspectives and mysterious gloom, so well suited to the ancient faith and its sumptuous ceremonials, St. Paul's words to the Athenians came before us with a particular force: "God . . . dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything."

When in Wales we attended service one Sunday morning at a remote and rudely-built little church of rough stone, a

. . . modest house of prayer,
As lowly as the lowest dwelling,

situated right amongst the heart of the mountains. The service was primitive enough to have satisfied the sternest Puritan. The interior of the tiny God's house was severely unadorned; the walls were of unhewn stone; there were no stained glass windows "to exclude the light,"—nothing whatever to appeal to the imagination. From the magnificence of Gloucester Cathedral to that poor, primitive fane there could hardly be a more startling contrast. The congregation consisted of a chance angler in a gray tweed suit, a stray artist, who came with his white umbrella (for it was raining), a few farmers, and sundry shepherds, clad in homespun, who brought their collie dogs with them; the dogs quietly sleeping till the service was over. Well do I remember that Sunday. The prayers were simply read, the singing was more hearty than harmonious, the sermon was plain, not clever, but earnest. Yet that simple service impressed me far more than the most magnificent cathedral service, or even the gorgeous ritual of High Mass of the Roman Catholic Church, with the bowing priests in rich vestments, the chanting of solemn music, the altar ablaze with lights, and the air thick with incense,—that simple service seemed nearer the ideal of early Christian worship, before the poor and persecuted Church grew rich and prosperous, and finally powerful and arrogant. For did not the priestly power make even that proud Plantagenet monarch Henry II. do most humiliating penance, and cause him to be scourged, after walking through the streets of Canterbury barefooted? Verily, indeed, he might

be king *of* England, what of that? the Church plainly showed that she was king *in* England, and master of the realm; and as for those of meaner birth who dared to dispute her temporal power, why, she simply sent them to the torture and the stake; even, as here at Gloucester, she burnt good Bishop Hooper within sight of his own cathedral for the sole sin of wishing to reform abuses. A Christian Church without charity! Thus our thoughts ran whilst alone in the cathedral. Coming out of it into the sunlit streets, with the modern buildings and very modern crowds around, was like suddenly stepping by some unknown magic from a far-away past into the present. Gloucester Cathedral is the very antithesis of Gloucester city.

In the afternoon we made a start for Cheltenham. We soon covered the nine miles of wide and level road on to that place, for there was little of interest on the way. Moreover, it was a dusty road, with much traffic thereon, so that there was no inducement to linger on the stage. As we drove along we had a fine prospect of the steep scarped sides of the distant Cotswolds. The evening sun with its broad warm lights and contrasting blue-gray shadows brought out and emphasised the ruggedness of the cliffs. To the left of us May Hill was easily distinguished by its dark cap of firs; still farther away loomed up indistinctly the familiar rounded forms of the Malvern Hills. About half-way, by the roadside, we passed a little inn which had in its garden a summer-house curiously built amongst the branches of five trees. This was reached by a ladder. I never

remember to have seen a summer-house in such a novel position before. One would imagine that the ladder would be rather awkward for nervous ladies and old gentlemen to mount. On the whole, I think that a summer-house in the tree-tops is more romantic than convenient, or actually enjoyable.

We found very comfortable quarters, a pleasant company in the coffee-room, and excellent stabling for our horses at the old Plough Inn at Cheltenham. The very name of the ancient hostel, situated right in the heart of a fashionable watering-place, struck us as anomalous, and was quite refreshing after the grand-sounding titles of the chief hotels. The "Plough" was suggestive of the "good old times" when the comfortable English inn sufficed our simpler forefathers, and had not been improved (save the mark) into the modern hotel with its *table d'hôte*, black-coated waiters—mostly foreign—and general air of grandeur, glare, and glitter. I prefer the old-fashioned dinner, with "a cut from the honest joint," to a *table d'hôte*, even with the luxury of having a *menu* written out all in French (the English language is quite good enough for me, and expresses all I wish to know or say). Nor does it add to my enjoyment to have a German waiter standing over me kindly explaining in more puzzling English what the French terms mean. I suppose he finds this generally necessary. Well, perhaps it is sometimes, for once I had the satisfaction of finding a Frenchman who could not understand half the *menu* of a very fashionable hotel I was forced to spend a few days at. The German waiter coolly, though

evidently not intending to be rude, suggested that perhaps he did not understand French, was not used to it ; whereupon there was a regular row. I was mean enough to enjoy it. Possibly I do not understand my own language any more than the poor Frenchman did, for when I asked for a cigar after dinner, two boxes were brought to me. On further asking which were the mildest, after a pause the waiter exclaimed, "Oh ! you want to know which is the least strong. Yes, these are ninepence each, and these are a shilling." Well, I prefer the old-fashioned English waiter, whom I can understand, and who understands me, even if he does unnecessarily add and leave out sundry Hs. He generally has some interest in the place and locality, and often amuses me with the small gossip that he delights to retail whilst he waits at table. I prefer, too,—infinitely prefer, the old-fashioned civil landlord, who receives you with a pleasant smile, to the stony-eyed and magnificent manager who seems to be doing you an honour to take you in at all, though when you pay the bill it would appear that in receiving you he was performing a very profitable transaction.

In the evening I had a long chat over a pipe with a friendly barrister who was staying at our inn. He soon found out that we were on a driving tour, and as he had a love for the road and all that pertained thereto, we had a topic of mutual interest to talk about that lasted us well into the small hours. Not the least of the pleasures of a "cruise on wheels" is the number of interesting people you

meet from time to time, and even the friends you sometimes make. After a number of excellent stories,—and barristers are, with artists and anglers, about the best story-tellers I know of,—our newly-made friend related how it was that his love for the road arose. It appeared that he was staying at the old "Plough" several years ago, and chanced to be taken seriously ill there. The medical man who was called in to see him shook his head : he was very ill, he said, and the sooner he got back home the better ; and it was eventually arranged that it would be best for the invalid to proceed thither by road, doing the journey easily, and only taking short stages. Our friend told us that he had practically eaten nothing for some days, and that he felt so ill at the time that he thought he was booked, for better or worse, to another world. Forthwith he arranged to post home, going direct over the Cotswolds. The very next morning he started off, dreading the journey. However, he got on from the first better than he had expected. The bracing air of the hills revived him, and at the end of the journey he felt ever so much better instead of being half-dead, as he expected with considerable certainty. Moreover, he found that being out in the open air so much, together with the changes of climate, his lost appetite was gradually coming back ; so much so that at the last bait on the last stage in, he actually found himself making a comparatively hearty meal, and what was more to the point, enjoying it. The drive and easy progress through the fresh country air had begun his cure, and instead of dying—why, there he

was to tell his tale! Here was a grand testimonial regarding the value of driving tours as to their health-giving properties, and given "quite unsolicited," as the vendors of patent medicines say. I believe that our friend was suffering at the time he was so ill from great nervous prostration and severe dyspepsia. Therefore I should imagine from what we were told that there is no cure for such distressing complaints half so efficacious as a driving excursion through a bracing country,—a mountain one for choice, as the tonic of the air on the high open moors and that which comes sweeping down from off the hill-tops is simply life-giving, and seems to brace up the whole frame. For a hard-worked professional or a business man it is well to get right away amongst the mountains, where the telegrams cease from troubling and the morning papers are unknown; then the brain may get a proper rest, whilst the body gets braced up by a continual air bath. On each occasion that I have returned from one of my long drives, my friends exclaim, "How well you look!"—so much so that I am quite used to such remarks now when I meet any one I know within a reasonable time after my outing is over.

CHAPTER XX

Andoversford—A primitive post-office—Over the Cotswolds—Coachmen's stock stories—Northleach—A nearly perfect Perpendicular church—A startling mishap—An old-world town—An interesting interior—Poetic religion—An ancient brass—Puzzling words—The ruined home of Speaker Lenthall—Building stone.

IT was a real relief to get away from hot, fashionable Cheltenham into the open country once more. Soon after leaving the town we commenced the long ascent of the Cotswolds. A continuous climb of four or five miles through a wooded valley intersected by other smaller valleys brought us to the little hamlet of Andoversford, just before reaching which we passed a picturesque old Tudor house, now converted into a pleasant farmstead.

At Andoversford, by the roadside, stood a solid-looking stone-built inn, with extensive stabling, and a spacious yard attached,—manifestly an old coaching house of more than usual importance. We were now on the old highway from London to South Wales, formerly an important thoroughfare. This passes right over the lonely Cotswolds, and is one of the finest and most bracing drives in all England. A road erst busy with traffic night and day, but now almost deserted. During the whole of our journey

from Cheltenham to Northleach, a distance of about thirteen miles, I do not remember that we saw any one on the road,—that is after we had fairly got away from the former town. A sporting gentleman I met on our return home informed me that in the old coaching days the names of the landlords of this inn at Andoversford and of the two next on the road were respectively Sparrow, Swallow, and Marten; and that it was one of the stock remarks of the Jehu to call the attention of his passengers to the curious coincidence of the succession of names. In the village we noticed a board with an inscription "To the post-office" thereon. This rural post-office appeared to be situated at a solitary farmhouse, reached by a footpath across some fields. What a change was this primitive country and its ways to the fashionable Cheltenham we had so recently left behind! So great was the contrast it was almost difficult to realise it. There is often but a short step from modern England to the England of the past; but what a sharp dividing line there is between the two! Frequently the most unsophisticated spots are situated close beside the busy nineteenth-century world; they are in it but not of it. I have driven out from London and slept the same night within twenty miles of St. Paul's in an old hostelry that might have existed, just as it is, in the days before the Commonwealth. But the primitiveness and old-world quiet of Andoversford may soon be a thing of the past, for we noticed that a new railway was being made there. This, however, did not disfigure the country to the same

extent that railways in the course of construction generally do, for the warm ochry colour of the stones of which the workings are composed took away from that raw look that recently-formed embankments as a rule unhappily possess. It is a great thing, if you live in a stone country, to live in one where the stone is of a pleasant tint, for in the buildings, in the walls, and on the roads it pervades the country,—it cheers the landscape or depresses it.

We soon now got fairly on to the level of the top of the Cotswolds, and had an excellent road, considering the nature of the country and the little traffic. So high up were we that we found it rather cold, though it had been hot enough as we left Cheltenham in the sheltered valley below. The views all around us of the bare rolling hills stretching far away till lost in the dim distance, half land half sky, were very fine, and reminded us somewhat of the South Downs, only the roads had not that unpleasant glare that the chalk ones have, and the farmsteads were of stone instead of flint.

The air of the Cotswolds is delightfully clear, fresh, and even keen, on the hottest summer day. In the winter-time it is indeed too keen, save for the most robust; but it was right enough on that warm morning,—just sharp enough to cause us to put on an extra wrap and a light overcoat, and to make us feel that we were being braced up.

Some thirteen miles of this open country brought us to Northleach, quite an important little town, clean and neat, and, strange to say, rail-less,

A COTSWOLD MILL.



but connected with the outer world by telegraph. Here we found a comfortable though unpretending little inn, and after an excellent luncheon, washed down by some capital nut-brown ale, we set out to see if there were anything in the town or its surroundings of interest; leaving our horses to indulge in a prolonged rest after their hilly stage.

The little town itself had no special attractions for us, but the unpretending nature of the place pleased us. We found, however, that Northleach possessed a remarkably fine old Perpendicular church, in which we discovered a number of more or less curious fifteenth and sixteenth century brasses in a very perfect state of preservation. Not only is this church fine in itself, but it has the rare quality of being all in one uniform style, and that of the best of its kind,—it has the charm of unity. Most of our English churches are a conglomeration of different architectural styles, often blended harmoniously together, sometimes not, but always interesting as a record in stone of the various and progressive styles of ecclesiastical building from the early Norman to the latest choice specimen of the churchwarden's era. Let me here do one little bit of tardy justice to the eighteenth-century work, though I detest it. Truly it is not artistic, and has no feeling, but it is honest work, without any pretence at being anything better. Its joinery is excellent, if plain; its building sound, if ugly; and, no small matter, the materials employed are good. I cannot say so much for some of the work of the early part of the nineteenth century,—that

is just as inartistic and is generally more or less scamped. And what a descent from the supreme glory of the Early English Gothic to the marvellous specimens of the churchwarden's prime!

Some of the brasses in Northleach church are of large size. They are mostly to the memory of woollen merchants, judging from the inscriptions thereon and the woolpacks at their feet. One of these asks : "Of yr charite py for the soull of Thomas Bushe mchuint of ye Staple of Calis." What is meant by a merchant of the staple of Calais I do not exactly know, but some of my antiquarian readers may. There is also a very interesting brass of 1530 to a William Lawder, priest. This has on the top a curious rebus of the Trinity. In the church is a large double squint or hagioscope, affording to the worshippers in one aisle a view of the high altar. We wondered how those in the other aisle managed.

Coming out, we were struck by the extremely beautiful, very perfect, and but little weather-worn porch, showing how carefully the stone for its building must have been selected. I do not remember ever having seen a finer porch in any parish church, though there are one or two in the eastern counties, notably at Sall, that were originally perhaps even finer; but these are so decayed and damaged that one can only roughly estimate how beautiful they must have been originally. On the porch at Northleach still stands a statue of the Virgin Mary and Child, manifestly old; and apparently therefore it must by some

strange accident have escaped the eyes of the stern Puritans, to whom an image of the Virgin Mary was as a red rag to an infuriated bull. On some portions of the porch the chisel-marks of the masons who built it are still plainly to be seen. Nowadays a workman would deem such markings out of place, and carefully rub them down, and so make his stone facing monotonously uniform as to surface. The modern craftsman must have all his work as though it were turned out by an unthinking machine. He is mechanical rather than individual. His plain masonry is too perfect (as far as smoothness only) to be artistic,—it lacks any variety, it is a dead surface. Modern carving is still more dead; it is utterly devoid of feeling, and instead of quaint conceits in stone we get polished inanity, and in place of gracefulness we have meaningless forms, supposed to be decorative, and repeated endlessly, as though the work were turned out by contract at so much per foot—which perhaps, it is.

The exterior of Northleach church, with its stone carving and grand embattled tower, is almost as perfect and quite as fine as its beautiful interior. As the town was formerly famous for its clothing trade and rich merchants, it is probable that this noble fane owes its existence to their piety and prosperity, and that the fine ancient brasses mark the last resting places of those who contributed more or less largely to the building.

From Northleach our road on to Burford (where we proposed to spend the night, if we could find a

suitable hotel) led us along the top of the Cotswolds, our elevated position giving us glorious views both to the right and left. Far away on either hand stretched the lonely, rounded hills—a vast prospect of great green slopes that faded on the horizon into the distant sky. It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience that splendid drive: the air was so light and exhilarating, the views so wide; it was a luxury after the limited and unlovely prospects of London streets to let our visions have full range and rove absolutely unimpeded over the far-spreading panorama. The scenery was not exactly wild, for man has in parts cultivated these mighty sloping hills, but without in the least interfering with the majestic sweep of their grand contours, nor yet was it in the least degree tame. It was grand without being gloomy (for there is a grandeur in vast expanses of hill and dale even though the hills be of no great height). Yet though the landscape had no very special features, though it boasted of no prominent peak, no remarkable river, though it had, in truth, no pronounced characteristics beyond its revelation of mighty distances, so space-expressing, nevertheless it possessed a peculiar and uncommon charm of its own that did not fail to greatly impress us.

The finest prospect in time tires the eye, it grows weary of the changeless outline; but here as we drove along we had a prospect that was continually changing with every mile we progressed, yet ever preserving its wide and open character. No wonder men, surfeited with the artificial restraints and the manifold frivolities of fashionable society, wearied

of the endless routine of formal functions, plagued with a round of supposed pleasures, of dances, dinners, garden-parties galore, hie them for a welcome change to the untamed freedom of the ancient hills. What a relief it is to escape for a time from our boasted-over civilisation! For this reason do men go to the Alps and climb the mountains, or toil over unfrequented passes, or risk their life after big game in Africa, or go camping out, cycling, canoeing, take walking expeditions—or, if very wise, driving tours! Most men do something of the kind, just as fortune and their inclination may dictate. The object in each case is the same, only the means differ according to personal feeling or overpowering circumstances. The love of Nature, of the mountains and the moors, of the fields and the woods, of the rivers and the sea, is one of those things that the world can never rob us of,—whatever may happen to us, the sky above and the lovely landscapes around are ours for ever; scenery is no man's property.

Thus my thoughts wandered as we drove along on the top of the lone Cotswolds. The road was wide and free, the horses going steadily. It was just the very opportunity to indulge in a little harmless day-dreaming; no harm either, I thought, in a quiet pipe, so I put my hand to my pocket to feel if it were there—and a very strange thing happened. Suddenly a great puff of smoke was wafted from behind me. What could be the matter? Had the wheels got over-heated, or had the dog-cart caught fire in some mysterious way? These were the

thoughts that flashed across me more rapidly than I can write them. The horses were hastily pulled up. I looked down and backwards, and it was some seconds before I discovered that it was my overcoat that was on fire, and smouldering famously. It was the work of an instant to tear it off, but it took longer to stamp the fire out. The mysterious outbreak for the moment was quite alarming ; the smoke rose in thick clouds. Had any one been looking, I wonder what he would have imagined. It is not every day that you can see a man driving (or walking for that matter) on fire. The cause of the annoying mishap—for it spoilt an excellent and most useful coat—was soon discovered. In my pocket was a box of "Flaming Fusees" (for on the road, if you are a smoker and want a light, matches simply try the temper overmuch). Well, it must have so happened that in placing my hand on my coat pocket I hit it rather hard, and so rubbed one fusee against another. This of course instantly started the whole boxful, whereon they burnt the coat, much as a red-hot coal would. I can testify to the excellent lighting (almost too excellent) and consuming power of those fusees. I cannot, unfortunately, give the maker's name, as I did not notice it when I bought the box, and the little accident very effectually prevented me from doing so afterwards!

When traversing a mountain country, you may now and then pass over an elevated moorland track, but you have always the peaks above you, and to reach the moors entails a good deal of climbing and much up-and-down work, even when you are fairly

on them. As a rule, you cross over the uplands rather than keep along their summit, passing from one valley to another. And when in the valley, then the road leads along it for miles with hills on either hand (for valleys are a natural line of communication). But here on the glorious open Cotswolds we kept on the very top of the hills all the way, right above everything. It is pleasant sometimes to feel that you can look down on the rest of the world! Then as we journeyed on, deep down in a sheltering hollow to our right, we saw the time-toned buildings and gray church tower of the quaint old town of Burford, remote and shielded from the outer busy world by the surrounding hills.

Driving down a steep descent that necessitated the brake being put hard on, we soon found ourselves in an old-world, antiquated town,—a sleepy, picturesque, medieval-looking place, that charmed us at the very first glance we had of it. The Bull Inn there looked inviting, so we drove into its ancient courtyard, and fortunately found that both ourselves and our horses could be accommodated for the night. This was good news. We were duly shown into a comfortable old-fashioned sitting-room, albeit the chairs were arranged round the walls in that prim fashion that seems to be the special pride of some country landladies.

The furniture stood round with such an air,
There seemed an old-maid's ghost in every chair,
Which looked as it had scuttled to its place
And pulled extempore a Sunday face,
Too smugly proper for a world of sin,
Like boys on whom the minister comes in.

But we soon altered all that. The precise uniformity was too terrible. We established a little artistic disorder in the over-tidy room, for the virtue of tidiness may be carried to excess. Even honesty, on certain exceptional occasions, may be carried a little too far, it seems to me ; for once, when staying at a fashionable watering-place, during a very wet day, I noticed a man with a watering-cart busily watering the too moist roads. This proceeding struck me as peculiar, so I ventured to ask him the reason of his being at work on such a day, whereupon he told me that his master had entered into a contract to water the roads so many times a day, and that he was an honest man, and performed his contract to the letter !

The windows of our room looked down upon the queer old main street of the town, with its picturesque, irregularly-roofed, and oddly-built houses, all in the fashion of past centuries ; anything more unlike modern times it would be difficult to imagine. To thoroughly appreciate the quaintness of the place one should see it directly after travelling through a new land, say on the return from a tour through go-ahead America ; the contrast would be startling then,—absolutely startling. We were delighted with Burford. It is a genuine bit of old England, little, if at all, altered for centuries past. A town that must still be reached, as of old, by the road ; for the railway has, luckily for the lover of ancient beauty, left Burford "high and dry," literally as well as figuratively.

In the evening, whilst the waning light lasted,

we took a short stroll of inspection round the town, and saw sufficient to prove to us that it would well repay exploring. We therefore determined to delay our start till the afternoon of the next day, so that we might devote the whole of the morning to seeing something of the place.

Rambling down the old-world street, we found the church situated in the lowest part of the town, and close to the little river Windrush. The building is a singularly fine one ; it contains some unusually large chapels, and several curious brasses and stately monuments ; moreover, it possesses certain peculiar and uncommon features that make it of more than average interest. Entering the building, we were not quite sure at first whether there was not some mistake, and that we had stepped within a Roman Catholic church, for straight before us we saw a most unique chapel of carved oak, enclosed by a carved canopy of the same wood, standing alone in the north aisle and projecting into the nave. This curious chapel had a special altar to itself, and above it were four images, much gilt and painted, one being of the Virgin Mary, crowned. As we were looking at it the rector chanced to come in, and most kindly offered to show us over the church. First he took us to the font (*temp. Edward IV.*), on the original lead lining of which are inscribed in jagged and uneven lettering the words, "Anthony Sedley. Prisner . 1649." This appears as though done with difficulty by a nail or some such blunt instrument. Who this Anthony Sedley was, or why imprisoned here, we could not discover. The most probable

explanation seems to be that the church was converted into a temporary prison at the time of the Civil Wars, and that this record of confinement was left by one of the prisoners. But this is mere conjecture on my part. Next we were shown the pulpit. This, we were informed, was the original one, over four centuries old. We had to take the fact for granted, for it was all so painted over and gilt that it seemed almost like new. We have a prejudice for old carved oak unadorned save by its own ornamentation. However, it is a matter of taste. But why make a genuine old thing look brand new, when the dealers in "genuine" antiques have so much trouble in making new things look old? Verily it is a world of contraries!

Then we returned to make a more leisurely inspection of the curious chapel. This, the rector told us, was formerly a chantry. "It has been wrongly called St. Peter's chapel by archæologists, owing to the topmost figure above the altar being supposed to represent that saint." This figure shows a man holding a key in one hand and the model of a building in the other. This, our informant said, was not St. Peter at all, but the founder of the church. Immediately below the figure of the founder is an image of Christ, with His hand raised as though in the act of bestowing a blessing. To the right of our Lord is an image of the "Blessed Virgin Mary," with a gilt crown on her head and a lily in her hand. To the left is an image of St. Dorothea. On a ledge above the altar of the chapel—at least the rector called it an altar, and he ought to know—we observed a

cross, two candles, and two vases of flowers. Here in this chapel, the rector said, he held all early communions. From it is a squint through which the high altar may be seen.

Next we inspected the Norman base of the central tower, on the west wall of which we noticed a picture of the Crucifixion. Here the rector pointed out to us the doorway that led to the ancient rood-loft,—“To which,” he said, “on high days the priest ascended with subdeacon, candle-bearers, and acolytes, and sang the Gospel,—a beautiful and most poetic act; the priest being thus raised on the rood-loft midway between heaven and earth.” It seemed to us that, according to the rector, heaven was a good deal nearer to earth than we imagined. However, we merely replied, “Very poetic,” and thought to ourselves, how theatrical! After all, poetry is not faith, nor is romance religion. Somehow these remarks of our priestly conductor irresistibly called to our mind an incident in the life of Cromwell that Carlyle quotes with so much gusto. It would appear that the Rev. Mr. Hitch was performing in the loft of Ely Cathedral when Cromwell entered in person and “shouted to him, ‘Leave off your fooling, sir, and come down,’ in a voice which Mr. Hitch did instantly give ear to.” Manifestly Cromwell had no poetry in his soul! We could not help wondering what he would have thought of that much-imaged, gilt, and decorated chapel, with its cross, candles, flowers, and altar.

Then the rector took us through a doorway in the nave and showed us a little chapel built in the

reign of Richard III. In it is the original stone altar *in situ*, also a piscina, which the rector stated he still used. After showing us this, our conductor bade us good-bye, and said that we could look round about the church at our leisure, as he had pointed out the chief objects of interest. We thanked him for his kindness, and were not sorry to be left to ourselves awhile to inspect the very interesting old church in our own way.

Searching about, we soon discovered something that the rector had not pointed out, which interested us vastly more than all the things he had, namely, an ancient brass, dated 1437, set in the stone floor beneath the central tower. This had two figures on it of a man and a woman, with scrolls proceeding from the mouth of each, inscribed respectively, "Mary moder mayd der have m'cy on me Jon Spicer —And on me Alys his wyff lady for thi joyes fyve." Beneath the figures ran the following inscription, a trifle perplexing perhaps on the first reading (save to antiquaries well versed in archaic wording). We managed, however, to make it all out, except the term "rode-soler." This was quite beyond us; we could not even make a probable guess at its meaning. This then is the inscription—

I pray you all for charitie hertely that ye
pray for me to oure Lord that sytteth on hye
fful of grace & of mercye. The wiche rode-soler
in this churche upon my cost ye dede do
wuch wt a laumpe burnyng bright both day
and night and a gabul wyndow ded do make
In helth of soul & for Crist sake. Now Jhu
that dydyst on a tre on us have mercy & pite Ame.

On the chancel wall near to this quaint brass we noticed a tablet with the following inscription, which we thought worth copying, and which I give here :—

Here Lyeth the Body of
Elizabeth the wife of Edward
Neale Belfounder Deceased
August the 8th. 1671
Here may I Rest Vnder this Tombe
Not to be Moued til the day of Doome
Vnless my Husband who did me wed
Doth lie with mee when he is dead.

Then wandering about, we came upon a chapel almost entirely occupied by a grand and elaborate monumental tomb to Sir Lawrence Tanfelde, “Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer. Deceased 1625.” This most stately tomb is composed of alabaster and different coloured marbles; it is much gilt and painted, and is in truth an imposing affair. Beneath a canopy are the recumbent effigies of the Baron and his wife, and in a space below the effigies is a ghastly representation of a skeleton. There are some verses on the tomb by Lady Tanfelde to the many virtues of her husband; in the last of which she says—

Love made me poet
And this I write
My harte did doe yt
And not my witt.

But why did she not write good prose—if she could—instead of poor poetry? The verse quoted is by far the best of the number. In a corner of this chapel is an ancient helmet suspended on an iron bracket. Whilst Sir Lawrence Tanfelde has

such a grand monument here, William Lenthall, the famous Speaker of the Long Parliament, is buried somewhere in this ancient church, without even a slab to mark his resting-place,—at least, if there is one, we could not discover it after a diligent search. At the west end of the church we found still another chapel, and a very large one, filled with monuments to the Silvestre family. It is seldom that one finds in such a remote country town a church so replete with interest, so well preserved, and so little injured by the restorer. If one comes upon a country church of much interest, it frequently is in bad repair, or else, if in good condition, has been so carefully restored that it looks painfully new.

Having finished our inspection of the ancient fane, we made our way to Burford Priory; a beautiful old house, though now, alas! in a very ruinous state. Still, we could readily see what a fine residence it must once have been. It was here that Speaker Lenthall lived and died. It may be remembered that when Charles I. haughtily demanded the arrest of John Hampden, Pym, and others, Lenthall, falling on his knees before the king, replied, "Sire, I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to say, anything save what the House commands me."

We reached the pleasantly wooded grounds that surround the Priory through a gateway in a high stone wall. Passing through this, the old house stood right before us, desolate, ruined, and picturesque, with its shaped gables, mullioned

windows (open to the weather), broken walls, and ivy-grown chapel; a chapel that was built by the Speaker, and is joined to the house by an arched stone wall with a balustrade on the top. The interior is too far gone in ruin for one even to roughly guess what the old place was like in its prime. The drawing-room is the best preserved (or perhaps I ought rather to say the least damaged) part. In this still exist portions of an enriched plaster ceiling, and on the bare walls are the remains of a finely carved mantelpiece. There is some rough glazing in the drawing-room windows that helps somewhat to protect the chamber; but through the broken panes of these windows the intrusive ivy was seeking an entrance when we were there.

The chapel is a very interesting ruin, though the roof has gone, and all the glass has long since disappeared from the tracery of the windows, and nettles and weeds are growing where the pavement once was; but still there are left some curious carvings and details in stone well worth inspection. This chapel is approached from the house by a terrace, and over its elaborate carved doorway the word "Lenthall" deeply cut may still be read, as clear and sharp now as when first chiselled. This chapel, with the raised stone terrace and quaint balustrade, forms the background of S. E. Waller's well-known and engraved picture, entitled "The Empty Saddle." It is a grievous pity that so picturesque and historic a house should have fallen into such decay.

The stone carvings of the chapel and of the

front of the house are all most clear and sharp, proving how excellent is the quality of the stone of which they are built,—quarried doubtless from St. Kitt's in the neighbourhood, whence some of the best stone employed in the building of St. Paul's and in Wren's work upon Westminster Abbey is said to have come. If, as is most probable, Burford Priory was built of stone from there, its enduring qualities bespeak its great value. It is not always that stone carvings will stand the storms and frosts of centuries and show such small signs of weathering. There is so large a supply of bad building stone in the market, that it seems a pity these quarries are not now being worked. Look at some of the crumbling walls of the Oxford colleges, then look upon the buildings of Burford constructed of local stone. Even when they obtain good stone, a number of architects, to their shame, do not seem to know how to employ it properly. Stone used in building, to last, should be laid as it lay in its natural bed when quarried, not any way that suits the convenience or laziness of the masons.

CHAPTER XXI

An anecdote of the road—Minster Lovell—A ghastly discovery—Witney—An old butter-cross—Grape-growing—A gardener's opinion about birds—Eynsham cross—The tyrants of the road—The art of driving—Oxford—Thame—A mysterious stone figure—An obliterated epitaph—An ancient helmet with crest—Princes Risborough.

WE had a delightful afternoon on which to resume our journey; the sun was shining warmly, but a cool breeze was blowing that was most refreshing. Mounting the hill that leads out of the sheltered hollow in which Burford stands, we found ourselves once more driving along right on the top of the bracing Cotswolds, with extensive views all around. Away over the hills to the left of us was Wychwood forest. Connected with this forest a good story was told me some years ago by a gentleman who vouched for its accuracy. It happened in the pre-railway days that Lord Dash was posting across here on his way from London to Cheltenham, and coming in sight of Wychwood forest he asked a lad who chanced to be standing by the roadside at the time, "What is the name of that wood over there?" pointing to the forest. To this question the boy civilly replied, "Wychwood, sir." Whereon my lord, who was rather short-tempered,

exclaimed testily, "Which wood? why, you fool, that wood right over there, what is it called?" "Wychwood," again replied the boy. The question was repeated, and the same answer given. This aroused Lord Dash's easily-provoked ire; he jumped out of the carriage, and said that unless the boy at once told him the name of the wood he would give him a good thrashing; but before he could lay hold of him, the boy bolted, thinking on his part that the strange gentleman was an idiot, and my lord being rather stout and given to gout, was unable to follow, which, under the circumstances, was perhaps the best ending of the amusing incident.

Then as we travelled on we came to a romantic-looking village, situated in a lonely wooded valley some distance below our road, and on the banks of the pretty little river Windrush. We noticed some old ruins in this village that appeared to us like the remains of a small castle or possibly of a fortified manor. Rising out of some rent and rugged ivy-grown walls, we could make out a gray old tower, with what we took to be a watch turret at the top; also a great weather-worn gable, that might have been part of a stately manor-house, or of a large banqueting hall. The ruins, as far as we could judge from our position above them, appear to have been converted into a farmhouse and the necessary outbuildings, and left to the care of Time. On getting out our map to learn the name of this interesting and picturesque place, we discovered it to be Minster Lovell. This was once the property

of the Lovell family. Lord Francis Lovell (it may be remembered by students of history) mysteriously disappeared in the year 1487, after making for himself many enemies by accepting office under Richard III., he having been originally a Lancastrian. Hence the well-known and cutting lines—

The cat, the rat, and Lovell that dog,
Rule all England under the Hog.

For indulging in which little caustic rhyme William Collinbourne, sheriff of Wiltshire, was hanged,—which seems rather a dear price to pay for a two-line verse, however ill-natured. There were no comic papers in those days with political cartoons, otherwise a good many editors might have had a rather bad time of it. There are some advantages, after all, in living in this prosaic nineteenth century!

Very picturesque and romantic looked Minster Lovell, with its time-toned ruins, scattered homes, and ancient, hallowed church keeping silent watch and ward over the place. The river here is crossed by a gray old stone bridge that was built in the days of the mailed knights. How far, far off now seem those days of chivalry! But structures such as this, and especially the altar-tombs to armoured warriors that abound in our village churches, seem to bring them somewhat nearer to us. How much of old England there is that remains unaltered in the England of to-day which is so new. How charming it is when on a driving tour to come suddenly and unexpectedly upon such a picturesque old-world spot as Minster Lovell,—a graphic reminder of

the times that are past; a spot to delight an artist or a novel-writer, for surely a practised hand might paint or weave a romance out of those age-worn ruins. Indeed, there is a ghastly tradition connected with them. This we discovered afterwards. It would appear that early in the eighteenth century, whilst some alterations were being made at Minster Lovell, an underground vault was revealed, the existence of which was unknown. In this vault was found the skeleton of a man sitting on a crumbling chair, with some mouldering clothes and papers around, but all too far gone in decay to make anything out of them. They were there without any story to tell. It was presumed by some antiquaries at the time that these were none other than the remains of the luckless Lord Lovell, who had so mysteriously disappeared; the idea being that he had hidden himself in this vault (he having been attainted on the accession of Henry VII. to the throne), and that he was attended by a faithful old servant who brought him food, and who alone knew of his master's hiding-place; but the servant dying, Lord Lovell was left to starve. There are some weak points in the tradition that certain matter-of-fact people might take exception to, but one should not look at traditions with a harshly critical eye. Traditions were never intended to stand the test of too close an examination of their minor details, even historical books will not always stand it, and traditions (unless carefully revised) not at all. Once only have I ever been told a tradition in

which I could find no flaw, not even a weak point. The tradition in question was related to me by an old guide to a ruined castle, a man of unusual intelligence—for a guide. This tradition of course might be one of the exceptions “that prove the rule,” but on thinking the matter quietly over, I came to the conclusion that the clever guide (who I knew had shown several learned and *talkative* antiquaries over the castle) had, by listening to their remarks upon the defective parts of his story, gradually improved it, till at last, having eliminated all inconsistencies therefrom, the latest revised edition would bear the closest investigation without revealing any contradictions or irreconcilable details.

Soon after leaving Minster Lovell, we came to a long and gradual descent that took us into the pleasant, wide-streeted town of Witney, erst famous for its blankets, and so still for aught I know; but anything more unlike a smoky manufacturing town it would be difficult to conceive. We had intended merely to bait here and to drive on to Oxford in the cool of the evening. However, on arriving at our inn, the landlord received us with such a pleasant smile, and we were shown into such a cosy little sitting-room, with freshly gathered flowers on the table; the maid who brought us our tea was so attentive, civil, and neat, that we were tempted to change our plans and to remain over the night at Witney. Had we needed any further inducement to do this, it was provided by the fact that our horses had excel-

lent quarters (and as they afforded us so much continuous pleasure, it was only fair that we should in some measure consider their comfort). Moreover, Witney looked such a pleasant, sunny little town, with some quaint old buildings in it and around that appeared as though they would repay a leisurely inspection ; the country too beyond was suggestive of agreeable walks. Therefore, as haste was no part of our programme, we wisely decided to stay a while at Witney.

Wandering down the ancient street of the place, the first thing that attracted our attention was the curious old butter-cross, erected, so we gathered from a date thereon, in the year 1683. The weather-vane on the top of the bent roof was in the shape of a lamb and flag. This ancient structure gave quite a special character to the townscape, if I may be permitted the term. Next we proceeded to the fine old church, that with its tall spire must be a conspicuous feature in the view for miles around. The interior is, however, of less interest than the exterior. Then we noticed an inviting footpath leading across some green fields. This looked so attractive that we could not resist the temptation to explore it. We followed the path along to a picturesque wooden foot-bridge that spanned a little willow-bordered stream, and in a short time we found ourselves in the pretty little hamlet of Coggs, which possesses a curious old church with its tower set obliquely to the main edifice, and has other features of interest besides. But here our wanderings were brought to an end, for

it was getting late, and the darkness was coming on apace, so we retraced our footsteps to our comfortable hotel, and spent an enjoyable evening in the cosy sitting-room looking over our sketches and consulting our maps as to our future progress. .

The next morning broke dull but fine, and after another stroll round the town, we started off on an easy eleven-mile stage to Oxford. Our road thither led us through a pretty undulating country. On our way we noticed that some of the cottages had vines trained over their fronts, and on one or two of these there was a fair show of grapes. Pulling up at one spot, we asked a cottager who was busily at work in his small garden if the grapes ripened well. "Oh yes," he replied; "they ripen all right, but we never get any ripe ones; the birds take them all." We told him that we thought it rather hard lines to be robbed of the fruit in that manner. He quite agreed with us, and further remarked that he should like to be a bird, for they lived well and did no work. "But they get shot sometimes," we said. "And serve 'em right," he replied; "birds are born thieves." We thought it unprofitable to continue the conversation, so drove on, leaving the old man grumbling at the thieving propensities of the feathered tribe.

About half-way on to Oxford we passed through the large village of Eynsham, where we noticed a fine old church; we, however, did not stop to inspect this, as we did not feel in the humour just then for church-exploring. In the village street we noticed an ancient stone cross raised on some

steps, and enclosed by railings. In another mile or so we crossed the Thames by a long stone bridge, for crossing which we were charged the not exorbitant sum of a penny each for our horses, and a penny for each wheel.

Just as we had got free of the bridge, we met two great traction engines noisily puffing along and dragging behind them some trucks. As these monsters monopolised the best portion of the highway, we blew the horn to clear the road. The drivers thereupon shut off steam and made room for us to pass, but there was only just room, and the horses pranced about a little, which seemed vastly to amuse the drivers. I suppose they were used to that sort of thing. Happen what might, *they* could not be hurt. These traction engines are the tyrants of the road, and the dread of nervous horsemen. After driving for days along the quiet country lanes and deserted highways, it is enough to alarm the best-mannered horses to be suddenly confronted, at a bend in the road, by one of these hideous contrivances snorting along right in the middle of the way. Once when travelling in Sussex we had the doubtful pleasure of meeting a traction engine in a narrow lane with great banks on either side. There was absolutely not room to pass, so we blew the horn and pulled up. The driver truly was very civil; he said he was very sorry, he had no idea of meeting any one, he very rarely did; but this did not help us much. The result was he had to back his engine for two miles or more at the rate of about three miles or less

an hour, whilst we had slowly to follow him. It happened that we had a long stage before us, and were in a hurry to get on, the more especially as the weather was threatening ; but there was no remedy for it. It certainly seems to me a shame that any one should be allowed thus to monopolise a country lane ; it is the reversal of the old order, "the greatest good for the greatest number."

After this experience, we had an almost level road on to Oxford, but if anything the gradient was slightly in our favour. The horses seemed very free and fresh that morning, and considering that they had only done a short stage the day before, and as again we had another short and easy one before us, we allowed them for once to have their own way and to indulge in a good trot, much to their satisfaction and our own. It was quite inspiriting to hear the rapid clatter, clatter of the hoofs on the smooth hard road, the jingle of the harness and the pole-chains, and the regular rumble of the carriage, that plainly told the pace we were travelling. Then as we sped along, through the greenest of green fields leading up to gently sloping hills on either hand, the dog-cart commenced to swing in that pleasant easy way that only a well-built and well-balanced carriage can. It was a delightful restful motion ; the box-seat was like a self-rocking chair. This movement is only possible in the front seat of a carriage ; those who are driven cannot experience it, unless they sit by the side of the driver. There is one great advantage too in being your own coachman, namely, that you have an

uninterrupted view ahead and all round ; there is nothing in front of you but your horses, and you see right over them. To be driven across country by a servant, and to take a back seat yourself, is to lose three-quarters of the pleasures of this form of travel. Unfortunately in these days driving seems almost a lost art. There are plenty of people who can "get along" with a single horse or a pair, and who sometimes manage even to progress safely with four in hand ; but the driver who can take the same horse or horses across country, over all sorts and conditions of roads, up hill and down, for a lengthened journey, and bring his animal or animals home fresh and well, after say a five hundred miles' tour, is not to be met with every day. During the whole of my driving tours I have never had my horses sick or sorry a single day, I have never been delayed even a single hour by any mishap to them ; yet there are some people who say that the pleasure of such an outing is but too likely to be ruined by a horse going lame, or something else happening to bring it to a sudden termination. Well, horses may break down, so may a steam engine. But a careful driver who understands the art of giving and taking, and saving his horses where needful, and who looks after their welfare when on a tour, has, according to my now lengthened experience of road-work, but little to dread on this account.

Though the scenery of our stage on the whole was very charming, an exception must be made of the last couple of miles into Oxford. These were singularly uninteresting. This is certainly the wrong

way to approach that famous city by road,—*the* approach is over Magdalen Bridge, coming from London, when you have the noble Magdalen Tower, the unequalled “High,” with the many domes and spires clustering romantically before you. These suggest a medieval city in its golden prime. I think it was Sir Walter Scott who said that this approach to Oxford was the finest to any city in the world; and if there is a finer one anywhere at home or abroad, I have failed to discover it.

I have said that entering Oxford from the direction we did the road was uninteresting. First of all, it was monotonously straight; and straight roads, if convenient, are not beautiful. Moreover, the first structures (I will not call them buildings) you meet are not the gray, old time-worn colleges, but two modern ugly railway stations, and beyond these again you proceed for a while along a narrow street of poor houses. But afterwards the beauty of the city is suddenly revealed, and is perhaps all the more striking for the great contrast with the mean suburb. Even ugliness has the virtue of acting as a foil to beauty!

Of Oxford I am not going to attempt any description. We did not go a-wandering to see familiar places, though of necessity we had now and again to pass through them. Suffice therefore to say that we spent a delightful afternoon wandering around the ancient colleges and about their shady, dreamy grounds. How well the time-toned buildings harmonised with the smooth green lawns they enclosed! The buildings were old and wise-looking;

the lawns too were old, but they were fresh and green all the same! There is an anecdote told of an American millionaire who during a visit to Oxford greatly admired the smooth and velvety green lawn of one of the colleges, and desiring to have his own at home as fine and smooth, he sought out the gardener and offered him a five-pound note if he would reveal the secret of how it was done. First the gardener took the money and replied confidently, "You see, sir, it's just like this: you've got to mow the grass regularly for five hundred years. That's the true secret, sir. Thank you very much." Truly a lawn as smooth almost as a billiard-table, as soft to tread on as moss, is not to be made all at once; but perhaps five hundred years is carrying a good thing a trifle too far.

From Oxford we determined that we would drive home to London through Thame, Princes Risborough, and High Wycombe, as we had already more than once traversed the very picturesque and hilly line of country between Oxford and London, *via* Dorchester, Henley, and Maidenhead. Thus we should pass over fresh ground; and there is a certain charm in freshness that even beauty, when familiar, cannot boast.

When we got well away from the spreading suburbs of Oxford, we struck upon a very charming rural country. A treeful country of many meadows and wooded hills, with pleasant old farmsteads and picturesque cottages scattered about; and last, but not least, with more than one busy windmill boldly placed on the top of the low hills. A very English-

looking land it was, mellow, pastoral, and restful ; the very essence of peacefulness.

There is one marked result of the agricultural depression of late years we did not fail to notice, namely, that it is somewhat changing the features of the landscape in the old corn-growing districts. Now that the raising of cereals does not pay, farmers are laying down pastures in place of tilled fields, as these need less labour, and beef and mutton pay a good deal better at the present time than wheat and oats and barley. Moreover, the hedgerows that used to be kept so painfully low and well trimmed are now, once more, allowed to grow much at their own sweet will ; for high hedges do not damage grass lands, and the shelter they afford to cattle against the cold winds and rain makes them to be desired, rather than otherwise, by the farmer. So far well, as regards the picturesqueness of the fields ; but, on the other hand, the old-fashioned, prosperous-looking farmstead, with its fat ricks around, is, owing to the same causes, being improved out of existence,—and the jovial farmer of the John Bull type, where is he ?

After a while we found upon consulting our map that we could make our way to Thame by cross-country lanes instead of by the dusty highway, and this without increasing our distance to any material extent. So we chose to diverge from the more direct route on to the narrow, green lanes with their overarching trees ; and a most delightful shady drive we had along them. A winding, rural English lane is a very pleasant way to explore,

whether in a carriage or on foot. It necessarily twists about a good deal, but it is all the better for that, for these lanes exist rather for local convenience than for the benefit of through travellers.

Thame struck us as we drove into it as a very clean, wide-streeted, picturesque, sleepy old town. We noticed as we passed along its main thoroughfare some quaint half-timbered buildings, weather-toned into many soft hues. Some of these had projecting upper stories, and we even saw one or two thatched houses, that gave the place a very unsophisticated appearance. The Spread Eagle, that proclaimed itself by a sign swinging from a great bracket of wrought iron, ornamented with much scroll-work, looked inviting. Manifestly this was of old the coaching house of the place; so we drove under the wide arched entrance, and found ourselves in a spacious courtyard, gay with flowers and green with creepers. Here we decided to rest a couple of hours to refresh ourselves, and bait our horses, and to give us the opportunity of making a sketch of an odd gable end, or of anything else that took our fancy; but we found so much of interest in the town that we never made a sketch after all.

It was to Thame that John Hampden found his way after the fatal fight in Chalgrove field, and our landlady pointed out to us the house (considerably altered since his time) in which the Puritan patriot died. But as we were told that the house had been so much changed, we did not feel the same interest in it as we should have done

had it remained in its original condition. Then in passing, as we discovered the church door wide open, we took a peep inside. We had no intention of taking more than a passing glance at it, but we found so much of interest there that we stayed some time. The first thing we noticed on entering was a curious-looking full-length figure, about six feet in height, boldly carved in stone. This was let upright into the south wall of the church. This figure particularly interested us, for though damaged, the carving appeared to us exceedingly dignified and classical, not to say impressive. There was no inscription near it, and we were much puzzled to understand the meaning of it. Just then, fortunately, a clergyman entered with a few people to decorate the church for a harvest festival ; so we introduced ourselves to him as travellers by road, and asked if he could give us any particulars about the figure. He said that he was very sorry, but little was known about it,—at the restoration of the church it was discovered underground. Some people thought that the carved stone formed the top of a missing stone coffin, but it seemed to him, and to us, by far too fine a work to have served such a purpose. Some antiquaries, he informed us, suppose the figure to be a pre-Christian piece of sculpture, but how it came to be where it was unearthed no one appears to be able to say. These meagre particulars only served to increase our curiosity as to the origin of the statue, but we could obtain no further information about it.

In another part of the church we observed a

mural tablet to the memory of one Robert Crewes, who died in 1731. The inscription thereon, after a long record of his numerous virtues, now ends—

A pattern of Patience, Humility,
Charity, Goodnature, and Peace.

But below this is a mark on the slab as though some lines had been erased. The clergyman (I know not whether he were the rector or the curate) saw us looking at this, and remarked that the blank space had been formerly filled by a verse which had been cut away as out of keeping with the sacred interior. Our curiosity was again roused. We were anxious, if possible, to learn what the wicked lines were. It was but human nature. Fortunately the clergyman was able to oblige us, and, more to the point, repeated them for our edification. The erased inscription I give here, so that it may not be wholly lost, and also that my readers may judge how wicked it was, and how thankful we ought to be to have our morals so carefully guarded, even to the obliterating of a profane epitaph to the dead. These then are the sinning lines,—I only hope that I shall not hurt the tender susceptibilities of any one by repeating them!—

In the morning when sober, in the evening when mellow,
You nowhere could meet such a jolly good fellow.

Time has robbed us of many a choice epitaph and quaint inscription; churchyard literature has become serious and highly proper, if at the same time exceedingly commonplace and terribly un-

interesting, therefore we can the less afford to lose by deliberate obliteration any curious epitaph or quaint conceit of old, whether on humble tomb or stately monument.

In the chancel of Thame church is a grand altar-tomb, elaborately carved in alabaster, to Lord "Wyllyamz of Thame," his effigy resting upon it by the side of one to his wife. This monument is remarkable from the fact that the effigies have their heads turned towards the high altar, instead of their feet, as is, I believe, the universal rule. The reason for this strange departure from long-established custom was another puzzle that we could not solve. So we ventured to appeal again to the good-natured clergyman in case he might be able to inform us. He said the tradition is that the monument was so placed on account of Lord Williams's changefulness in the matter of religion, though we could not exactly see the drift of the argument. It seems that this Lord Williams of Thame was a sound Protestant in the reign of Edward VI., a bigoted Roman Catholic in the reign of Mary (when he notoriously distinguished himself in the persecution of the Protestants and was present at the burning of Cranmer), and finally, again an ardent Protestant in the reign of Elizabeth. Truly, my Lord "Wyllyamz" seems to have had a most conveniently elastic conscience. He was instrumental in burning others, but took good care of his own precious body. Doubtless had the times and circumstances required it, he would have readily turned a Mahometan or anything else, and have

cheerfully aided in the burning both of Protestants and of Roman Catholics, so as to remain in favour with the powers that be. One cannot feel very proud of such an Englishman, even though he were a noble, and has a grand altar-tomb raised over his ashes.

But there was something else in the chancel that interested us far more than Lord "Willyamz" of Thame's stately monument, and that was an ancient rusty helmet with its original crest—a ram's head—on the top. This was supported on an iron bracket that projected over the tomb of Sir John Clerke, who died in 1537. This old helmet once belonged to that brave knight, and the sight of it seemed to shorten the long centuries that stretch between the romantic days of chivalry and the prosaic present. On a brass let into his marble monument below we read, "Here lyeth Sr John Clerke knyght wyche toke louys of Orleans duk of Longueville pryon ye XVI day of August in the Vth. yere of ye reigne of ye noble & victorius Kyng Henry ye VIII."

From Thame we had a very pleasant drive on to Princes Risborough in the cool of the afternoon. There was nothing of special interest to note on the way, though the scenery throughout was very attractive. As we passed through the little village of Kingsey we observed its plain square church, as ugly as a Welsh chapel,—and ugliness in a religious edifice could hardly further go. How Kingsey came to possess such an ugly church I cannot say. I put the fact down to my old enemy the restorer. I hope in doing this I have not been

unjust, for he has sufficient sins to answer for without any wrongful addition to them.

Now, as we drove on, the rounded beech-crowned Chiltern Hills came in sight. Very beautiful they looked in the short-lived splendour of their autumn glory, with the warm light of the setting sun resting upon them and forming great pale blue shadows in their broad hollows. Exceedingly peaceful did the low-lying Chilterns appear with their cultivated slopes and shady woods, their sleepy villages and lonely farmsteads scattered here and there on their grassy sides, as well as in the sheltered valleys below. One could hardly imagine that the ancient office of the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds was a needful one in the past; the duties of which were the suppression of the numerous bands of robbers that infested the district for long years. Nowadays the office is a polite fiction, apparently retained for the sole purpose of enabling members of Parliament to resign their duties, though why they should not be able to resign them in a more simple manner puzzled us. But customs established by ancient precedent are ever slow of change, and in this case the curious fiction does no one any harm.

Then as we approached Princes Risborough,—the name of which place, by the way, the signposts conveniently shortened to “Risboro’”—we caught sight of a gigantic cross, cut out of the chalk of the hillside, that rose right above the little town. This we afterwards discovered to be the Whiteleaf Cross, of which presently. Driving into the sleepy place,

we found modest accommodation at an unpretending inn that boasted of the sign of the George and Dragon. At a first hasty glance we felt that perhaps the small inn was too primitive for even such hardened travellers as ourselves. Pulling up at the door, we asked of the landlady who made her appearance there if we could be accommodated for the night. She replied, as though she had divined what was passing through our minds, "Certainly; Lord Rothschild, our landlord, slept here for a week, and you shall have the very rooms that he occupied." After this what could we do but gratefully accept the hospitality of the little inn? If it had sheltered such a great man as Lord Rothschild for a whole week, surely it could entertain such humble beings as ourselves for a night! Then the landlady busied herself to get our rooms ready, and as she laid the cloth for our modest tea in the little parlour, she told us that only a few days before a party of Americans had stayed there. They were, she informed us, like ourselves on a driving tour through England, and had brought their own carriage and even their horses all the way from the States for the purpose. But further than this we could learn nothing, except that they seemed to be enjoying their outing very much, and that some book they had read about the pleasures of driving tours in England had called their attention to this mode of seeing the "Old Country," and forthwith they had determined to try the experiment,—and I can only hope that they had "a real good time of it." They deserved it for their enterprise.

CHAPTER XXII

Whiteleaf Cross—A “kissing-gate,” or a “wishing-gate”?—The beech-clad hills of Buckinghamshire—A quaint signpost—High Wycombe—Beaconsfield—Through the woods—An English common—Slough—The last stage in—Home again.

THE great cross that we had noticed cut out on the hillside above Princes Risborough is presumed to be a relic of Saxon times. It consists of a plain cross on the top of a huge triangular base, as though it were placed on the top of a pyramid. This truly remarkable piece of work, we were told, could be seen for miles around,—a statement that we readily credited. We felt ashamed at having to confess to ourselves that till we came thus unexpectedly upon it we had no knowledge even of the existence of this impressive memorial of the prehistoric past. Moreover, the cross appears to be well cared for, which cannot, unfortunately, be said of some other objects of a similar kind scattered about Great Britain.

Whiteleaf Cross is situated a little more than a mile away from Princes Risborough. Upon our asking the way thither, the landlord told us we could get to it across some fields, and explained that we must go through the “Kissing-gate,” from whence there was a well-marked path to the foot of

the cross. The "Kissing-gate" sounded delightfully romantic, but we did not know how to distinguish it from any other. Country people in directing you about are curiously forgetful that a stranger has no knowledge of local spots, or why should he ask his way at all? It is no great assistance when in a rural town to be told (as we have been) to "take the first turning past Mrs. Smith's house, then go straight on as far as the Squire's, and follow down the lane over against Farmer Somebody's barn, and you will see it straight before you." On that occasion, I remember, we ventured to remark that we did not know Mrs. Smith's house, nor even one of the others. Whereupon our informant appeared quite taken aback. "Not know Mrs. Smith's house!" the old body innocently exclaimed. "Well, you do surprise me. I thought everybody"—with emphasis on the everybody—"knew Mrs. Smith's house. It's the big one round the next corner, right against the boys' school;" and so on for five valuable minutes or more. This is all very amusing to a certain extent, but when you are anxious to get to a place, and are wholly uncertain as to the way, or even the right direction, it is sometimes a little provoking, especially if time be limited. We have found generally that the best method is to offer a boy a penny or twopence to go with us; but often boys are not to be had now, not even for pennies, for they are all carefully gathered in by the School Board.

But I have been digressing, a habit I am very impatient of—when some one else does it. I broke

in upon the conversation with the landlord, that took place upon our asking the way to the Whiteleaf Cross, he having told us that we must go through the "Kissing-gate." Whilst we were endeavouring to obtain more explicit directions, the landlady made her appearance on the scene, and exclaimed, "It's not a Kissing-gate at all, it's a Wishing-gate." But this corrected information, though exceedingly interesting, did not help us much as to the way; and as thereupon a long argument arose between the landlord and landlady as to whether it were a Kissing gate or a Wishing one, which appeared to us as though it would continue for some time, we eventually set out, sketch-book in hand, to find the way ourselves as best we could. Whether we passed through the proper gate or not I cannot say, but we found no great difficulty in reaching the spot, as it became plainly visible on leaving the town, and we struck straight for it across country.

Whiteleaf Cross we found to be a very big affair. The base of the triangle we roughly judged, from stepping it, to be little short of four hundred feet. The height of the whole cutting from the top of the cross to the roadway below is possibly about three hundred feet; but it is exceedingly difficult to judge at all correctly of such an unusual object on a hillside without any well-known thing to compare with it as to size. We found little else beyond this unique monument of an unrecorded past to interest us in Princes Risborough, and surely it was sufficient. So, having leisurely sketched and inspected it, we returned to our little inn, and order-

ing the horses to be harnessed, were soon again on our way, bound for Slough through High Wycombe. We had a lovely drive as far as West Wycombe along a winding road with gently sloping beech-clad hills on either hand,—woods and hills so characteristic of the pleasant land of Buckinghamshire. On the road we passed a lonely public-house, called the Friend at Hand,—another fresh title to us, and not altogether a bad one for a solitary place of entertainment.

As we approached West Wycombe we noticed in a bold position on the crest of a hill a curious-looking building with a huge gilt ball on the top that glowed in the bright sunshine. This structure we afterwards learned was actually a church, though it seemed more like a gigantic summer-house of stone. It was rebuilt in this most extraordinary fashion (1763 A.D.) by Francis Dashwood, afterwards Lord le Despencer, an eccentric nobleman who made himself conspicuous by founding what he chose to call an order of Francisiens (after his name Francis) at the ruined abbey of Medmenham, having for its motto *Fay ce que voudras*. The strange doings of this order are a matter of history.

At the junction of three roads a little farther on we came to a tall round stone pillar with a square top. Each side of this top, facing the roads, was inscribed respectively as follows:—

From
The County Town
Miles
XV

From
the University
Miles
XXII

From
The City
Miles
XXX

And on the remaining side, where there was no road,

D. D. D. F. Dashwood
ÆRÆ · Christianæ
MDCLII.

Manifestly this curiously inscribed, and, let it be confessed, graceful and substantial signpost, was another of Lord le Despencer's eccentric erections. It would be well were all signposts as enduring. The quaint directions on it amused us. They certainly possess the merit of being original.

High Wycombe struck us as being a bright, clean little town. As we drove into it we were very pleased by the quaint manner in which the little river Wye (how many Wyes are there in England, I wonder?) ran parallel to the roadway, with rows of cottages on the other side, which were reached by small wooden bridges. Some of the cottages had a bridge all to themselves, others shared one amongst three or four. This part of High Wycombe reminded us much of some of the more remote Dutch towns. Here we rested awhile beneath the sign of the Red Lion. The lion that stood above the doorway was in truth a very red one. He was fierce of countenance, and held his tail

stiffly stretched out, giving a sort of defiant welcome to the traveller. On arriving we were shown into a cool sitting-room, in which we discovered sundry copies of old newspapers, London and local, left doubtless by previous occupants; and whilst waiting for our lunch, for the want of anything else better to do, we glanced through them. Often have we found matter to amuse us in odd copies of newspapers, and upon this occasion we came upon one or two paragraphs that were truly gems in their way. One that we copied out of a London daily paper is too good not to be preserved. Here then it is, but the italics are my own. "A brutal murder was committed at Grogeen, near Listowel, the victim being a man named Fitzgerald, who was stabbed to death. *He lived long enough after death to accuse a man,*" etc. Another paragraph almost as diverting we clipped from a provincial paper. This stated that "a man named Browning was overtaken by a passenger train and killed. Curiously enough, he was injured in a similar way about three years ago."

Often a good deal of entertainment may be got out of country papers in rural inns, when overtaken by a wet night, and all other sources of passing the evening fail. The printers' blunders that appear are sometimes very odd. And the fine writing indulged in by the provincial reporter when giving an account of a local wedding, a cricket match, or some other piece of important country-side news, is oftentimes amusing, frequently more so than a comic paper or the latest novel.

From High Wycombe we had a good wide and

pleasantly undulating road on to Beaconsfield, which afforded us, now and again, very pretty views over a well-wooded and goodly extent of country. The green, tree-shaded lanes branching off to our left from time to time suggested delightful rural wanderings. We should more than once have been tempted to turn away from our direct road to explore them had it not been that we had appointed to be at Slough by a certain day and time, to pay a promised visit to a friend ; and we wished to show, that though we were travelling by road in the good old-fashioned style, we could be as punctual—or more so—as if we were coming by train. Wandering along cross-country lanes, exploring out-of-the-way nooks and corners of the land, is truly a very charming method of spending a summer day, but you require to have plenty of time before you, and to have no special appointed hour to arrive anywhere in the evening. Indeed, some of the Buckinghamshire lanes are nearly as perplexing to find your way along as the more famous ones of Devonshire. That latter county has by no means an undisputed monopoly of puzzling byroads.

At Beaconsfield we called a short halt in order to inspect our map, as we had to leave the main highway here and proceed across country to Slough. Turning sharply to the right, in the centre of the wide-streeted sunny town, we found ourselves on a narrow country road with grass-grown sides. Soon afterwards we drove through thick woods, and in some places had high sandy banks on either side of

us, so that our views of the surrounding country were limited. But the green gloom of the woods was very restful to our eyes, and if the scenery was limited in extent, it fully made up for that failing by its quiet beauty. Here and there we came to a tiny stream with fern-clad and mossy banks ; and at one spot we saw some purple heather, that brought back the wild hills and spreading moors of Wales to our mind. I could not resist the temptation to pull up the horses and pluck a sprig, just for a button-hole. More beautiful to me a bit of wine-stained heather to wear in my coat than any expensive production of the florist. My wife too did not neglect the opportunity to gather a pretty posy of wild flowers, which for my own pleasure I would not willingly have changed for the most costly bouquet that Bond Street could provide. Perhaps my tastes are too simple for an over-luxurious age. Well, simple tastes are generally easily gratified, and have the advantage of not being expensive, so that I have no desire to change them. I have no quarrel with those who think differently, though I do not envy them ; they are welcome to their own views, if they will only let me have mine in peace. I even think the flower of the common potato very lovely ; its form and colour are often very beautiful. And a wild, tangled hedgerow delights me more than any prim cultivated garden ; the owners of which I have noticed more than once seem half afraid to pluck their own flowers without first asking permission of their highly-paid gardeners !

It was indeed a delightful drive from Beacons-

field to Slough through the sweet-scented, bird-haunted woods. Now and then we caught sight of a great gnarled beech that was doubtless old two centuries ago. This reminded us that we were in the close neighbourhood of the famous Burnham Beeches, which, however, were old friends of ours, so we did not diverge from our way to inspect them again, as we did not wish to lose any of the unknown sylvan beauty of our present road. Now and then through the surrounding woods we caught a peep of the gray gable of an old farmhouse or of a cottage home, with the blue smoke slowly ascending therefrom to the bluer sky above ; otherwise we observed but few signs of human occupancy.

Then as we progressed, suddenly our road opened out to a wild bit of uneven common, over which the wind blew fresh and free, making waves of the weeds and lank grasses as it passed along, bending before its autumn blasts the few stunted thorns and other trees scattered about, and rippling the waters of its reed-grown pools. What a feeling of life and movement a brisk breeze gives to a scene ! It animates the landscape as well as braces the body. How attractive to the lover of wild, unspoilt nature are these open commons and bits of waste lands, set every here and there right in the heart of cultivated England. How the lungs seem to expand, and the mind as well, when one suddenly comes upon a wild bit of windswept common after driving for some distance along a confined, hedge-bordered lane. One gets a little weary of over-civilisation at times, and when one cannot get the

moors or the hills, a rugged common is better than nothing.

Then by degrees the character of the landscape changed, fields gave place to woods,—from a few yards our horizon expanded to miles. The dim outline of blue hills became visible in the distance, and presently the red-brick houses of Slough came into sight; and by way of pleasing contrast with that collection of commonplace buildings, the ancient Round Tower of Windsor Castle rose up grandly beyond,—a stately mass of dark gray, dominating the whole prospect; a very embodiment in stone of the regal power of the days gone by. For how many centuries has that tower looked down upon the smiling landscape spread out below it? But whilst our thoughts were wandering our horses were speeding along, and soon we crossed the Great Western Railway, at which moment a sudden rush and roar beneath us, a cloud of steam, a rapid "chic, chic, chic," and a long metallic shriek, told us that the western express was tearing along the marvellous iron way; and it was lost to sight before even the dust that it had raised in its rapid passage had settled. What would William the Conqueror think, I wonder, could he return to life and see from his ancient castle this modern miracle of steam that has changed the world? But even the locomotive has become commonplace to us. Will it ever be that our descendants will look longingly back upon "the good old railway days," even as we fondly picture to ourselves "the good old coaching times"? Perhaps when some new, more wonderful, method

of travelling is invented in the far future, we shall have the artist of that day taking for the subject of his painting a deserted railway with an antiquated locomotive rusting away by the side of the forsaken but erst busy iron road. Who knows what the whirligig of Time may bring forth?

Driving through the intensely uninteresting town of Slough, we passed by the old red brick house where Sir William Herschel lived, and where his great telescope was fixed with which he discovered amongst many other things the distant planet Uranus. The house is more notable, however, historically than architecturally. Soon afterwards we found ourselves driving over the smooth approach to the house of a friend, where we were received with a hearty old-fashioned welcome, and spent a delightful time in the pleasantest of good company. During the evening, comfortably seated in an easy chair, we related for the benefit of our kind host and hostess some of the many things we had seen, the incidents we had experienced, and the mild adventures we had encountered on our most enjoyable outing. That night we slept soundly at "an English home,"—the best "hotel" by far on the road.

The next morning broke gloomily; a gray brooding sky was overhead that foreshadowed wind and rain. The weather was in keeping with our spirits; for did we not feel gloomy too at the thought that our delightful tour was nearly over? A few more miles and we should be once more in smoky, busy London. Well, all things must have an ending in

this world ; knowing which unalterable fact we tried to be as philosophical as possible under the circumstances. The last day of a holiday is always more or less sad. Still, after all, the reverse of the medal is not wholly black, for is there not a pleasure in returning home again, even though that home be in unbeautiful London ; for what true-born Briton is there who does not love his home, and his own arm-chair ? As the Scotch proverb has it, "East, west,—hame's best."

In the afternoon—for our kind host would not let us away before—we started in a sorrowful state of mind for our last stage in. If our feelings were somewhat depressed, it must be confessed that the scenery on the way was not of a nature to enliven them. The country on to Hounslow was about as flat as a country well could be ; beyond Hounslow there was practically no country left, only a wearisome succession of houses more or less commonplace. Still, the flat landscape interested us in a languid fashion because of its very monotony,—truly it would not have discredited Holland. Here and there a gleam of still water gave a sort of momentary cheerfulness to the dreary prospect, and at one spot a few lonely poplars rising above a dank, reedy pool, dark and tall and weird against the cloudy gray sky, gave a welcome character to the view. But, on the whole, a fitter country to pass through by railway I do not know ; and as we drove moodily along, for the nonce we almost envied the railway traveller comfortably seated in a cushioned carriage, reading his paper, heedless of the prospect.

We drove at a rapid pace through ugly Colnbrook,—I think really the very ugliest town in all England; a town that even made Slough seem interesting by contrast. Did the horses know that they were going home, I wonder? I cannot say, but they trotted on briskly, and we, nothing loth, let them have their heads, though the roads were soft and the going heavy; but to-morrow they would have a long and well-deserved rest,—to-day they had to work. At Hounslow we stopped for a few minutes at a road-side public to give our animals a breath and a little gruel, for we had no desire to unnecessarily prolong the stage by putting up for a bait. Then we sped along through the narrow street of dirty Brentford, and in due course passed through crowded Hammersmith, and soon afterwards we reached Kensington and home. No sooner had we got safely under shelter of our own door than down came the rain that had threatened for the last hour or two. We were lucky to escape a wetting so narrowly. Indeed, all throughout our journey we were favoured by the weather. And so ended our pleasant pilgrimage along the old coach roads to far-off St. Davids,—that quaintest of cities, set right away from the rush and hurry of the modern world on that lone, rugged Welsh headland that looks so boldly down upon the wild western ocean. And what a treasure-store of glad and bright memories did that memorable pilgrimage give to us,—memories of sunny days, and days of gloom and storm, of scenery grand and inspiring, as well as restful and rural;

of ancient abbeys, ruined castles, old romantic homes, and quaint past-time towns and unsophisticated villages ; and last, but not least, of many a time-toned hostelry wherein our forefathers took their ease in the good old coaching days : and wherein we also took our ease, much to our satisfaction. The remembrance of our long and delightful drive is to me a precious possession. Often and often since has some charming mind-picture of what we saw, some pleasing incident of the journey, come up before me : a remembrance that has refreshed me and made my heart glad when weary and ill at ease with the unbeautiful surroundings of the great city in which I have my home. Still, "beauty is as beauty does," and with all its faults I have a Londoner's love for the dear old smoky city, though I fear I cannot go as far as a lady friend of mine who declares that she loves London—"smuts and all"! Still the very fact of residing in a large city vastly enhances my enjoyment of the *real* country when I go into it.

Only those who in sad cities dwell
Are of the green trees fully sensible :
To them the silver bells of twinkling streams
Seem brighter than an angel's laugh in dreams.

Now that our wanderings are over, who shall dare to say that we have not fared as well, or a good deal better, than the vast multitude who rush abroad as soon as ever their holidays begin, to taste the doubtful pleasures of the heat and bustle of a Continental tour? Let those who will go abroad in crowds, travelling as fast as steam can convey

them, even grumbling that it will not take them faster, journeying far and perchance really seeing little. But old England is big enough and good enough for me ; for though it is not a large country, the marvellous wealth of its ever-varying scenery is perfectly astonishing. I think it was Hawthorne who said that it would take "a hundred years to see England properly." In which opinion I quite agree. Therefore those who go abroad have this excuse to plead, that were they to stay at home till they had explored the whole of England, they would never leave it.

In conclusion, I may remark for the benefit of those of my readers who possess neither horses nor carriage, and yet who may desire to take a holiday on the road, and thus see, as they can in no other way so delightfully or well, some portion of their own fair country out of the regular beaten tourist track, that if they only know how to go to work, a suitable horse or horses, with the necessary harness and a convenient carriage, may be hired for such an outing at a moderate cost.

It happened that our old horses, that had gone so many journeys with us over all sorts of country in all sorts of weather, and had traversed the length and breadth of Britain more than once, were compulsorily retired from active service on account of old age. We were therefore compelled to look out for fresh ones. But good useful roadsters are not to be bought every day—not even for golden guineas that do so much in this world ; and so we determined to hire a pair till such time as we

should procure what we required. (By the way, whilst on the outlook for some suitable animals, I was much amused at a remark that a friend made to me upon my asking his advice as to the purchase of a certain horse. "My dear fellow," he exclaimed, "I would much sooner recommend you a wife than a horse!") We went the round of a few job-masters, and, stating our exact wants, asked if they could hire us a pair of horses for a driving tour. We saw a number of pairs, some likely-looking ones amongst the lot, but at unsuitable terms. At last we came upon the very article we wanted at a local job-master's,—a pair of hardy roan cobs, just out of work, and therefore in proper condition for such a journey as we contemplated. Moreover, they were by no means bad-looking,—indeed, more than once they were actually admired when afterwards in our possession on the road, and had they been younger we should probably have kept them, for I and they had become great friends during the outing. For the hire of these cobs we were asked the not unreasonable sum of two pounds a week for the pair; and we found that, had we required it, we could also have jobbed a roomy, comfortable phaeton for another sovereign a week. A carriage which, if not quite so smart as our own turn-out, was certainly not a shabby affair, and quite good enough for travelling purposes. We had the horses out on trial, liked them, and concluded the bargain forthwith. Upon our returning the pair to the job-master, he was honest enough to say, that they were even in better condition than when we took them from him. This shows

that with reasonable care and proper handling, even a long journey by road, over a heavy and hilly country a good portion of the way, and in spite of the constant change of stabling, covering so many miles day after day, does not injure horses ; though some people hold to the contrary, and perhaps they are right according to *their* driving. I may remark here that we had various prices quoted for the hire of the horses for the journey, and that, in our opinion, the highest terms did not mean the best horses.

Finally, by way of an Appendix I have given an Itinerary of our journey, with distances of stages, as well as distances from London. The places marked with an asterisk are those where we slept over the night. This in case it may interest my readers and be of service to any of them who may care to follow in our footsteps—or rather, wheel-tracks. Should they do so, I can only say, that if they enjoy themselves as much as we did, great will be their enjoyment. And now it only remains for me to bid good-bye to those who have travelled with us in spirit so far, and to express a wish that they may some day have the infinite pleasure of seeing the beauties of untravelled England from the box-seat of their own carriage.

APPENDIX

ITINERARY OF JOURNEY

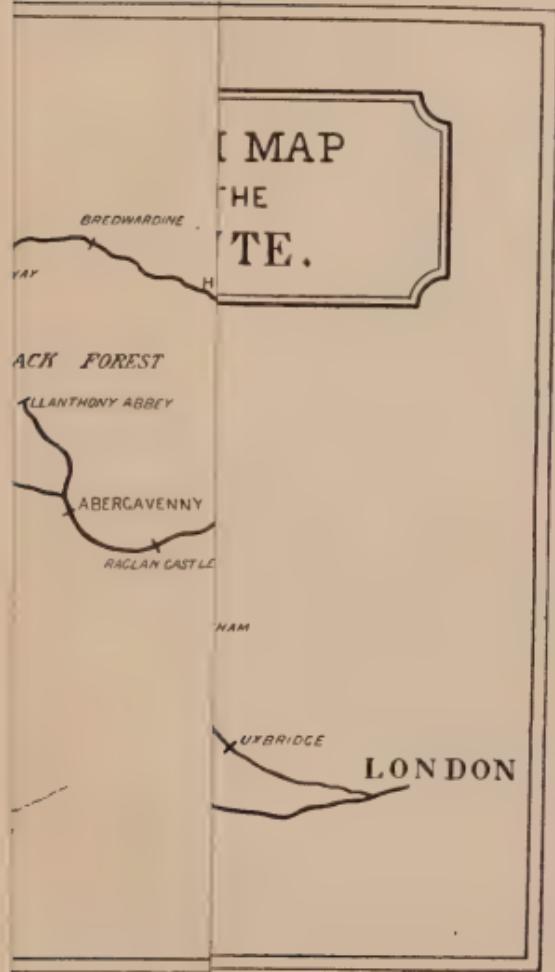
OUTWARD FROM LONDON TO ST. DAVIDS.

		Day's Stage in Miles	Distance travelled in Miles
Kensington to *Uxbridge	.	15	15
Uxbridge to *Aylesbury	.	25	40
Aylesbury to *Bicester	.	16	56
Bicester to *Chipping Norton	.	19	75
Chipping Norton to *Broadway	.	17	92
Broadway to *Tewkesbury	.	15	107
Tewkesbury to *Ledbury	.	14	121
Ledbury to *Hereford	.	16	137
Hereford to *Hay	.	20	157
Hay to *Brecon	.	15	172
Brecon to *Llandovery	.	21	193
Llandovery to *Llandilo and } to Carreg Cennin and back }	.	24	217
Llandilo to *Carmarthen	.	16	233
Carmarthen to *Haverfordwest	.	33	266
Haverfordwest to *St. Davids	.	16	282

HOMEWARD FROM ST. DAVIDS TO LONDON.

St. Davids to *Fishguard	.	16	298
Fishguard to *Newport	.	7	305

		Day's Stage in Miles	Distance travelled in Miles
Newport to *Newcastle-Emlyn	.	20	325
Newcastle-Emlyn to *Llandyssil	.	8	333
Llandyssil to *Lampeter	.	14	347
Lampeter to *Llandovery	.	20	367
Llandovery to *Brecon	.	21	388
Brecon to *Abergavenny	.	20	408
Abergavenny to Llanthony } and back	}	22	430
Abergavenny to *Monmouth	.	16	446
Monmouth to *Gloucester	.	28	474
Gloucester to *Cheltenham	.	9	483
Cheltenham to *Burford	.	22	505
Burford to *Witney	.	7	512
Witney to *Oxford	.	11	523
Oxford to *Princes Risborough	.	20	543
Princes Risborough to *Slough	.	23	566
Slough to Kensington	.	20	586



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